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BRAVE AND BOLD

A DIFFERENT COMPLETE STORY EVERY WEEK

No 31

**SAVED BY
HIS LUCK**
or What followed
the Yacht Race



BY **CORNELIUS SHEA**

Crack! It was Jack's revolver that spoke, and the dusky pirate uttered a cry and dropped back into the sea again.

BRAVE & BOLD

A Different Complete Story Every Week

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SAVED BY HIS LUCK;

OR,

What Followed the Yacht Race.

By CORNELIUS SHEA.

CHAPTER I.

RUN DOWN IN THE FOG.

It was the day of the great international yacht race, which was to be sailed over the outside course.

Ever since daylight the little town of Keyport, New Jersey, had been hidden by a dense sea fog; but as the town clock tolled the hour of eight it gradually began to lift, and in a little while the hills of Staten Island commenced to show up plainly across the bay.

"Hurrah, fellows!" shouted a lad who was standing on the end of the old dock, "we will see the race after all. The fog has lifted."

As the lad who uttered these words is to play an important part in this story, we will give a brief description of him.

About seventeen years of age, nearly six feet in height, and about as slender as he could possibly be without being a "living skeleton;" rather pleasant-looking face, topped off with a head of curly red hair, and you have a picture of Frank Hall.

Frank's parents were wealthy. They had spent the summer at Keyport, and when the time came to return to the city, the first of September, the boy had coaxed so to stay a few weeks longer among the friends he had become acquainted with, that they at length consented.

It had been two weeks now since his parents had gone back to New York, but Frank did not seem to mind it. His favorite sport was yachting, and he was an adept with the little sailing craft he owned.

She was a beauty and no mistake, and could show a clean pair of heels to anything of her size in those parts.

Her name was the *Sea Bird*, and great pride was taken in her by her owner.

In spite of Frank Hall's rather ungainly appearance he was of a good-natured disposition, was clever and had lots of friends.

He and three other boys had come down to the dock this morn-

ing hoping that the fog would lift so that they could sail to Sandy Hook and witness the great race.

Frank's companions were named Ben Sharp, Hen Lakely and Larry O'Dowd, respectively.

The latter-named individual was a bright, intelligent Irish lad of very respectable parentage, and a general favorite with everybody.

He and Frank were fast friends, and many a good time had they spent together in sailing the little boat.

As soon as the fog had entirely lifted, the boys became in very exultant spirits.

"Come, boys, let us be off at once!" exclaimed Frank Hall, as he seized the stern line of the little yacht and began gradually working her toward the dock.

This feat was soon accomplished, and then, just as the boys were about to board the *Sea Bird*, a plainly dressed boy of about their own age made his way down the dock toward them.

We say plainly dressed, for he was naught else. His clothes were of very common material, but looked neat upon him notwithstanding this fact.

In size he was rather large for his age, and his frank, open countenance and curly chestnut hair gave him a decidedly handsome appearance in spite of his common wearing apparel.

Frank Hall stood with the line in his hand and waited for the boy to come up.

"Excuse me, but are you going over to Staten Island?" asked the newcomer, in a respectful tone.

"No," answered Frank; "we are going out to see the yacht race. Why? did you want to go over to the island?"

"Yes," replied the boy.

"Do you live over there?"

"Yes."

"What's the matter, then? Has some one stolen your boat?"

A slight shade of embarrassment overspread the boy's face for a brief moment.

"No," he said at length, "I have no boat. But what is left of the one I was in lies on the beach over there with her side stove in. There were four of us in her, and we were just about going to make a landing when the sudden squall which came up yesterday afternoon struck us and hove us upon a big sharp rock. We managed to get safely ashore, but the boat is ruined."

"Where are your companions?" asked Frank Hall, becoming interested in the story of the amateur shipwreck.

"Oh, they went home last night. They took the train to Perth Amboy and then crossed over to the island in the ferryboat. They promised to come after me the first thing this morning, but I see no signs of them yet."

"But," said Frank, in mild astonishment, "you say your companions went home last night by train and ferryboat. Why didn't you go with them?"

"That is easily explained," replied the boy, as he tapped his foot uneasily upon the planking of the dock. "You see, there was only money enough in the crowd to pay three fares, while there were four of us to go. We drew lots to see who was to be left behind, and it fell to me. That's all there is about it. I came down here, and seeing that you were getting ready to go somewhere, thought probably that you were going across the bay; that is the reason I asked the question."

"Say, what is your name?" suddenly asked Frank Hall.

"Jack Darling," replied the boy.

"Well, Jack Darling, don't you want to go to the yacht race with us? We will land you on Staten Island when we come back."

"I would like to," returned the boy, hesitatingly, "but, you see, I have had no breakfast; and besides, what will my friends think when they come over after me and find me missing?"

"Friends be hanged! They had no business to go away in that manner. One of them, at least, should have stayed with you. If they come over after you let them have a little fun staying around here waiting for you to turn up. As far as breakfast is concerned, we have plenty to eat on board the *Sea Bird*, and we will fit you out to the queen's taste in that line. Come, I've taken a liking to you; what do you say—will you go with us?"

For a moment Jack Darling hesitated, and then stepping forward, he grasped Frank Hall by the hand and said:

"Yes, I'll accept your invitation, for I think you mean just what you say."

"Good! Now all hands get aboard and we will be off."

It did not take the boys long to board the *Sea Bird*, and in a very short space of time the little craft was under full sail, speeding down the bay before a light breeze which had sprung up.

Jack Darling soon became very friendly with the crew of boys he had fallen in with, and when his appetite had been somewhat appeased from the larder of the *Sea Bird*, he became as much enthused as the others about the great yacht race that was to take place that day.

Straight for Sandy Hook went the little craft, Frank Hall at the tiller.

Soon the Highlands of Navesink were passed, and presently they had rounded the point and were on the bosom of the broad Atlantic.

The sea did not run very high, but rolled in a listless sort of a way, and the *Sea Bird* rode upon the billows like a thing of life.

Crafts of all descriptions were gathering about the spot, and it took a practiced eye to safely sail a boat through them.

But Frank Hall knew his business, and his companions placed the utmost confidence in him.

Almost as soon as the *Sea Bird* arrived upon the spot the yachts started, and a feeling of pride filled the breasts of the crew as they saw the sails of the American sloop fill, while she forged across the line almost by the side of her Irish rival, the *Shamrock*.

"I don't believe in betting," said Frank Hall; "but if I did, I would wager all that I am worth on the American yacht!"

Meanwhile Jack Darling said never a word, but gazed intently at the two racers.

They were now skipping over the waves at a fair rate of speed, the Irish cutter slightly in the lead.

After them went the little *Sea Bird*, close in their wake, though she was gradually being left behind.

But the great international yacht race was not destined to be finished that day.

Scarcely three-quarters of an hour had elapsed from the starting time, when the wind almost entirely died out.

"Whew!" whistled Jack Darling, from his seat in the bow of the *Sea Bird*; "if we don't look out now the tide will take us on out."

He had scarcely ceased speaking when a heavy fog began to make its appearance; in less time than it takes to write it, they were enveloped in the midst of an immense cloud bank.

The fog of the early morning had lifted but for a short time.

The occupants of the little boat now began to grow decidedly uncomfortable.

They could hear the shrieking of steam whistles in almost every direction, but the sounds were so much confused that they did not know which way to point the bow of the *Sea Bird*.

At length Jack Darling and Larry O'Dowd seized the oars, and began rowing the little sailboat in the direction Frank Hall indicated.

Half an hour passed.

The steam whistles had been growing fainter and fainter every moment, and now they ceased altogether.

They had rowed the boat in every conceivable direction, but seemed to be further at sea than ever.

"If we only had a compass we would be all right," said Frank; "but as we haven't got any, we will have to keep on rowing until we strike land or something else."

For three solid hours they kept it up, rowing about in that heavy, impenetrable mist.

Then throwing down the oars, Larry O'Dowd exclaimed:

"It's no use, boys, we may as well wait for the fog to lift."

Just as the words escaped the Irish boy's lips, a dull, roaring sound was heard close upon them.

All hands involuntarily started to their feet.

The next instant a black body loomed up in front of them; then came a heavy crash, and before the boys knew what had happened they were struggling in the briny waters.

CHAPTER II.

ON BOARD THE LARKSPUR.

As the crash came, Jack Darling involuntarily flung his hands upward.

It was lucky for him that he did so, for they struck something which he quickly seized hold of with a firm grasp.

The next instant he felt his feet digging through the water, and he became aware of the fact that he had seized upon the fore-chains of a huge ship, which had run the little yacht down in the fog.

He shot one brief glance about him, and saw two of his companions struggling in the water, amid the wreck of the little *Sea Bird*, and then they were lost to view.

Jack was naturally a cool one, and he concluded that the best thing he could do was to climb upward and board the vessel.

Just as he made up his mind to do this, he was suddenly surprised to find out that he was not the only one in the thrilling position he was placed in.

He distinctly heard the labored breathing of some one, as though they were undergoing a very heavy strain.

Drawing himself upon the chains, he gazed about him.

On the lee bow of the vessel he saw Larry O'Dowd, clinging to the foot-rope with one hand, while with the other he grasped Frank Hall by the collar of his coat.

The Irish lad was breathing heavily, and the veins on his forehead seemed in danger of bursting.

He saw Jack almost the same instant the boy discovered him.

"Hurry up, for God's sake!" exclaimed Larry, "or we will both be lost."

It was but the work of a moment for Jack to crawl to his aid, and the next instant he had seized hold of the half-drowned Frank Hall.

Then, in less time than it takes to record it, all three of the boys were safely upon the foot-ropes of the vessel which had run them down.

But what had become of the other two boys which had comprised the yacht's crew?

Poor fellows! half stunned as they had been by the sudden concussion, they had been sucked downward beneath the briny waves—to death!

Half blinded, and nearly suffocated by his terrible bath, Frank Hall for a minute or so lay almost breathless in the arms of his two companions.

In a few minutes he braced up, however, and Jack said: "It is rather queer that none of the crew of this ship have made their appearance. Do you suppose they ran into us without hearing the shock? Let us climb up on the deck, anyway; come."

Suiting the action to the words, he grasped the top of the bow-rail, and in another moment he was upon the deck.

A man, who was evidently the lookout, stood before him.

The sailor started back in astonishment at the sudden appearance of Jack, and exclaimed:

"Avast, there, my hearty! Where did ye come from?"

He had no sooner uttered the words when Frank and Larry clambered over the bows.

"Blow me tight! if I don't believe somethin' hev happened! What air ther matter, lads?" gasped the now thoroughly frightened lookout.

"I guess something has happened," said Jack. "You have run our yacht down and drowned two of our party. Do you mean to say that you know nothing about it?"

"So help me Bob, I don't! I've been here for ther last twenty minutes on ther lookout, but ther blasted fog hez been so thick I couldn't see nothin'. I do remember of hearin' a kinder grindin' noise a leetle while ago, but I thought it was a floatin' log we had run afoul of. I'm sorry, my lads, but it can't be helped. Step aft, and tell your story to ther capen."

"That's the best thing we can do, I guess. Come on, fellows," said Jack.

Frank and Larry followed him, and they were soon at the after-part of the ship.

The fog was so dense that they could scarcely see a dozen feet ahead of them, but they could distinguish the moving forms of the sailors as they flew about attending to their duties.

In a minute or so they ran afoul of a man, whom they rightly judged to be the captain.

He stared in blank amazement at their appearance for a moment, and then a shade of anger crossed his countenance.

"What have we here—stowaways?" he demanded.

"No, sir, not stowaways," replied Jack Darling, who seemed to be left to act as spokesman. "Your ship ran us down in the fog. There were five aboard of our little boat; three of us managed to catch hold of the foot-ropes, and the other two are at the bottom of the ocean."

The captain's face turned pale at this, and his manner changed. Jack then proceeded to relate the whole story just as it had happened.

When he had concluded the captain shook his head.

"Well, boys, I am sorry, but that does not better the case any. We are sailing by compass, and we must be at least forty miles outside of the Hook. This vessel is the *Larkspur*, bound for China, and I am Captain Jobes, the man in charge of her. When the fog lifts—which I think it will shortly—we will probably meet a vessel going back your way; and if we do I will certainly hail her and put you on board."

"But suppose we don't meet a vessel, what then?" gasped Jack. "You will have to go to China with us, then," replied Captain Jobes, "for it is utterly impossible for me to turn back to New York now. You had better go below now until the fog lifts; I guess there will be no danger but that you will get safely back. I am very sorry about your two companions that were lost, though. Here, Mr. Johnson, just conduct these boys below and see that their wants are properly attended to. Boys, I will see you later."

It was with a strange feeling that the three boys descended the companionway which led to the cabin of the *Larkspur*, preceded by the second mate, Mr. Johnson.

In about half an hour the fog had entirely cleared, and Captain Jobes came down the companionway.

"Boys," said he, in a cheerful tone, "the fog has lifted, and the *Larkspur* is bowling along before a stiff breeze. We are away out of sight of land, but, as I said before, if we meet a vessel coming into port, I shall be only too happy to put you aboard of her."

But the afternoon waned, and finally night came on, and no signs of any incoming vessel yet.

And so it was the next day, and the next; then the three boys began to make up their minds that they were bound for China in earnest.

As the days passed they became more accustomed to life on shipboard, and gradually became resigned to their fate.

Occasionally, one would catch a tear-drop on the cheek of the

other, but this was when visions of home arose, and they forbore to speak about it.

The captain was a rather kind-hearted man, but the first mate was a regular bulldog, if we may use such an expression.

There was but one sailor among the entire crew that the boys took any fancy to at all, and this one was Bill Bunt, the man who had been on the lookout when they had first boarded the ship.

This old salt was of a very good-natured disposition, and he took great pains in teaching the three boys the duties of a seaman; for they had struck in to work from the first, as anything was better than idleness under the circumstances in which they were placed.

The first mate, who was a Spaniard named Ganzees, seemed to have a strong dislike for the boys, though he used the sailors remarkably well.

Every time he had the least bit of a cause he would curse and abuse the boys at a terrible rate.

But they said nothing to any one save Bill Bunt and Pete, the negro cook, who both came in for their share of abuse from the mate.

Pete, the cook, was a happy-go-lucky sort of an individual, and the boys took a strong liking to him in spite of his ebony skin.

The days drifted into weeks and the weeks into months, and one night, about a fortnight after the *Larkspur* had rounded the Cape of Good Hope, Jack Darling noticed Ganzees, the mate, holding very earnest conversation with several of the sailors near the forecastle.

There was nothing very particular in this, but then he had noticed many like proceedings of late, and he began to think "something was in the wind," as the saying goes.

He made up his mind to endeavor to find out what was going on.

Creeping stealthily forward, he at length came within earshot of Ganzees and the sailors.

Almost the first words that came to his ears were: "Kill the captain—take possession of the ship," and other like expressions.

Jack could not hear much of what the men had to say, so he moved a little closer.

As he did so, a large coil of rope tumbled over, and the next instant he fell sprawling at the very feet of the rascally mate.

CHAPTER III.

THE MUTINY.

Jack Darling sprang to his feet with a bound, but before he could make any further movement the mate had seized him by the collar with a vise-like grip.

"What do you want here, you young cub? Been listening, I suppose!" he hissed, between his teeth.

"Leave go of me!" said Jack, as coolly as possible, endeavoring to wrench himself free.

The group of seamen scowled fiercely at him, and looked as though they would like to make way with him.

"What do you want here, I say?" demanded Ganzees, fiercely.

"Nothing," replied our hero; "I was just coming this way when I stumbled over this coil of rope, that's all."

"That won't wash!" said one of the sailors. "Cap, he are onto our racket; I see'd him a-watchin' us afore."

It was a warm, starlight night, and as Jack stood there on the deck of the *Larkspur* in the midst of those frowning-visaged men, it made a very striking picture.

For the space of full two minutes not a word was spoken, and then the mate, clearing his throat, said:

"Men, I think we had better hasten matters a little and do the job to-night. It will never do to let this boy go, for he must certainly have heard our conversation."

"Ay, ay, cap; knock him on ther head to start ther ball, then," suggested a brutal-looking sailor.

At these words Jack Darling's heart sank within him.

It seemed that his earthly career was about to be cut short.

It was hard to die so young, and he made up his mind that he would not stand by and be butchered without making an effort to save his life.

With this thought in his mind, he made a sudden dodge, and succeeded in freeing himself from Ganzees' grasp; then, making a mighty bound, he cleared the overturned coil of rope and darted along the deck toward the stern of the ship.

Crack!

A pistol in the hands of the first mate was discharged at the fleeing boy, but the bullet flew wide of its mark.

Crack! crack! crack!

The next moment all was confusion on board the ship.

Straight for the captain's cabin ran Jack, and he was just in time to see that individual coming up the companionway, revolver in hand.

"What is the meaning of this?" he exclaimed.

"Mutiny!" shouted Jack; "get ready to fight for your lives."

The mutineers, under the lead of Ganzees, the mate, had halted near the mizzen-mast, and were evidently holding a sort of consultation.

This temporary halt gave those not in league with them a chance to collect together in one spot.

The latter party consisted of Captain Jobes, Johnson, the second mate; Bill Bunt, the three boys, and Pete, the negro cook.

A small party, indeed, to make any sort of a stand against eleven villains such as the mutineers were.

Yet the captain meant to fight them. He was a man of nerve, and he made up his mind that rather than lose command of the ship he would die fighting.

At the first report of the pistol, he and the second mate had gathered what weapons there were in the cabin, and rushed on deck.

Bill Bunt was at the wheel, and the captain's party surrounded him.

Presently the villainous mate raised his revolver and fired another shot.

The bullet cut a lock of hair from the old tar's head, but he never let his fingers lose their grip upon the spokes of the wheel.

Crack!

This time it was the captain's weapon that spoke, and one of the mutineers dropped howling to the deck.

This seemed to be a signal for a general onslaught, for the next moment Ganzees led his men upon the little party with a rush.

Jack, Frank and Larry had been given revolvers by the captain, and they soon showed that they knew how to use them.

But if they were armed, the mutineers were as well, and presently Johnson, the second mate, fell to the deck with a bullet in his brain.

This, for a moment, disheartened the captain's party, and taking advantage of it, the mutineers made a mighty effort, and at length succeeded in overpowering the brave little party.

Jack received a knock on the side of his head which completely stunned him, and when he came to he found that he was in the vessel's hold, securely ironed.

It was as dark as a pocket in the foul-smelling place, but he soon became conscious of the fact that he was not alone.

He was about to call out, when a voice, which he at once recognized as the captain's, said:

"How are you there, Jack Darling—have you come to yet?"

"Yes, captain," replied Jack, as he raised himself up as far as his condition would permit. "Are you the only one in the hold with me?"

"Not much, Jack, old boy," said the voice of Frank Hall, close at hand. "I am here, and so are Larry, Bill Bunt and Pete, the cook. None of us feel very good, though, I guess. Roll yourself over this way, and let me touch you. We all thought that maybe that crack you got on the head had settled you."

Jack at once obeyed Frank's request, and presently the little band which had made such a gallant stand against the mutineers were together in a bunch.

When they had been confined about twelve hours in the hold, one of the hatches was opened, and a couple of the mutineers came down with some sea biscuit and water.

Then, one at a time, they were allowed to eat this frugal repast, their captors standing over them with drawn pistols while their wrists were free from the irons.

When the two mutineers departed from the hold, they left the lantern they had brought behind them.

The prisoners did not know why this was done; but they appreciated it, at any rate.

Their hunger and thirst appeased, and being now able to see each other's faces, their spirits began to rise again.

Some time along in the middle watch, Jack Darling and his companions became aware that a mighty storm was coming up.

The *Larkspur* began to pitch and toss at a fearful rate, and all was confusion upon the deck.

They could hear the mutineers rushing hurriedly about upon the deck over their heads, in their efforts to keep the ship righted.

"If Ganzees and the sailors have been drinking, the ship is lost as sure as fate," said Captain Jobes.

"Ay, ay! that she are, capen!" exclaimed Bill Bunt. "I guess they must hev got at ther rum afore this! it are a bad outlook for us, an' no mistake."

Suddenly Jack, who had been silent for some time, gave an exclamation and held up his hands, free from the irons.

"Glory!" he almost shouted, under his breath, "the mutineer failed to lock my irons, and I have got my hands free."

"You don't say!" ejaculated Bill Bunt. "Well, now, if you kin crawl around ther hold and find a hammer, or somethin', you kin easily smash these things of ours; they won't be able to hear us on deck for ther noise of ther storm."

But our hero was already searching about before the old salt had ceased speaking; in a minute or so he discovered a short bar of iron.

The next moment he was busily engaged in smashing the cast-iron fetters which held them powerless to act.

Just as he had succeeded in freeing the captain, there was a dull roar, followed by a thunderous crash.

The *Larkspur* careened over on her side, and the next instant a perfect deluge of sea water poured into the hold.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WRECK OF THE LARKSPUR.

Had a bombshell exploded, it could not have caused more consternation among the prisoners in the hold of the *Larkspur*.

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Bill Bunt, "ther ship hev run upon a rock!"

"Yes, and the water is rushing in like a cataract. Quick, Jack!" exclaimed Captain Jobes, as he seized the old salt by the collar and drew him out of reach of the rapidly-rising water.

In an exceedingly short space of time Jack had performed a like service for Frank and Larry.

The water entirely submerged the darkey before the captain seized hold of him, and when he was drawn out he was sputtering at a great rate, while the whites of his eyes shone with a terrified glare.

The ship still lay upon her beam ends, in the same position she had taken immediately after the shock.

This fact somewhat eased the minds of those in her hold, for it told them plainly that she was not liable to sink right away.

She had evidently struck upon a reef, and became lodged there.

The violent tramping upon the deck told them that the mutineers were getting ready to take a hasty departure.

A sort of chilly feeling came over Jack as he thought of this.

Prisoners in the hold of a stranded ship, which might go down at any moment. The situation was by no means a pleasant one.

"Well, captain," said Jack, "what do you think of the state of affairs?"

The captain shrugged his shoulders.

"We're in a bad box, my boy, and no mistake. The first thing to do now is to break the shackles from the rest of the party, and then we will see if we can't force our way out of the hold."

These words of the captain seemed to inspire Jack with fresh energy. Seizing the bar of iron, he went to work with a will, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing all hands free from their shackles.

"Now," said Captain Jobes, "to see if we can force our way to liberty!"

He struck a powerful blow upon the hatch-cover as he spoke. Bang! The blow was such a heavy one that the iron bar with which he had struck it recoiled, and flew from his hands with sudden force.

Splash!

"There it goes right through the hole in the ship's bottom," exclaimed Larry O'Dowd.

The boy was right. The iron bar had certainly fallen in the very spot where it had ought not to have done, and the only implement by which they might have forced their way out was gone.

"That's too bad," said Frank Hall, dolefully.

"De Lord sabe us now," moaned the cook. "I guess we am all drowned now for suah!"

"Blast it! don't holler afore ye are hurt," said Bill Bunt. "Jist wait a while; we'll find some way to git out o' here, see if we don't."

"You bet we will!" exclaimed our hero, in a hopeful tone; "don't give up yet, by any means."

"I didn't say I had given up," said Frank, in a more cheerful voice; "but I tell you it looks bad for us."

"Oh, yes, we is done gone, suah," wailed Pete, the darkey.

Bill Bunt bristled up somewhat at this.

"See here, nigger," said he, in a stern voice, "if you don't stop that kind o' talk, we'll throw you down that hole ter look for ther iron bar. Now, jist remember that, will ye?"

This speech seemed to have the desired effect, and the frightened darkey lapsed into silence.

Meanwhile, Jack and Larry were searching about every portion of the hold that was out of water, endeavoring to find something by which they might break open the hatch cover.

At last an empty cask was brought forth, and this they began pitching up against the hatch with all their might.

But it was no use; the hatch was securely barred, and there was no need of wasting their strength in pitching the cask about for nothing.

No sounds of the mutineers were heard upon the deck now, so they concluded that they must have left the *Larkspur* and the prisoners in her hold to their fate.

"There is only one way to get that hatch open," said Jack, after a minute's reflection, "and that is from the outside."

"That would be easy enough to do if ye were out thar ter do it," remarked the old salt, with a grim smile upon his weather-beaten countenance.

"Sure enough," assented the captain.

"Well, I am going out there to do it," said Jack, in a decided tone of voice.

"What!" gasped all hands, in a breath, gazing at him incredulously; "going out upon the deck? How?"

"I am going through the hole in the bottom and swim around to the lee side and climb up the chains."

"It is a risky piece of business, my boy," said Captain Jobes, "and I am afraid to let you make the attempt."

"I am satisfied that I can do it," returned Jack, "and I am going to make the attempt. The storm has died down by this time, and there will be no danger of me drowning, and if the sharks happen to get me, why, there will only be one less to starve to death in the *Larkspur's* hold."

The boy spoke these words so coldly that for a moment his hearers gazed in awe at him.

Captain Jobes was the first to speak.

"Make the attempt, my boy," said he, "and may success go with you."

The next moment Jack had removed his shoes and was wading in the water in the direction of the break in the vessel's bottom.

The hole, which was about four feet in diameter, was entirely under water, and when Jack's feet touched the edge of it he was wading up to his chin.

Turning about, he waved his hand and said:

"Well, here goes; I'll soon have you all safely out of here."

The next moment he sank beneath the water, and seized the jagged edge of the break with his hands.

Then, giving a sudden spring, he shot through the opening into the sea outside.

The boy was a good swimmer, and he determined to get a good distance from the wrecked ship before he came to the surface.

Then he could take his "bearings" better, and find the best place to climb upon the stranded vessel's deck.

A few powerful strokes outward, and then he began to rise to the surface.

In another moment he was breathing the fresh sea air.

Dashing the spray from his eyes, he glanced about him.

The storm had entirely ceased, but a very heavy sea was running.

There lay the *Larkspur*, firmly wedged between two immense rocks, which formed a part of a narrow reef.

One glance at the ship's position, and Jack was convinced that she would stay there until she went to pieces.

Before starting out toward the wreck, Jack turned about and glanced in the opposite direction.

He gave a violent start and rubbed his eyes, to make sure that he was not laboring under any delusion.

No, he was not. It was land he saw, and that not half a mile away.

Jack gave an exclamation of joy, and started to swim for the *Larkspur*, from which he was rapidly drifting, as the tide was running in shore.

His cry was quickly turned to one of dismay, however, for suddenly he saw half a dozen proas, loaded with dusky natives, put off from the shore, and come skimming rapidly toward him.

CHAPTER V.

THE MUTINEERS ON AN ISLAND.

As soon as Ganzees and his rascally followers had lodged their prisoners safe in the hold, they began to make merry over their victory.

They tapped a barrel of rum, and at once proceeded to haul forth all the luxuries that the ship's larder contained.

But the villainous mate was too shrewd to allow his men to imbibe too much of the rum; he knew full well that if he allowed them their own way they would become beastly drunk in short order.

He had great influence with the crew, and his word was law with them; therefore he had little or no difficulty in keeping them under good discipline.

When a double allowance of grog had been served all around, Ganzees said:

"Now, then, men, the *Larkspur* is ours, and I am captain. Now, the next question is, what shall we do with her?"

"Cruise about the Malay Islands until we capture a good prize, and then divide the boodle, and sneak out to furrin' parts an' enjoy ourselves ther rest of our lives," suggested a beetle-browed sailor named Jim Hardcastle.

"Your suggestion is a good one, Jim Hardcastle," said Ganzees; "and you may consider yourself appointed as first mate of this craft on the strength of it. Your words express my ideas exactly. What say you, men? Are we right?"

"Ay! ay!" came the unanimous response.

"Good! Then so it shall be."

Ganzees then proceeded to give orders as to the proper sailing of the ship, and retired to the cabin.

He was there still when the storm came up, and at its first approach rushed upon the deck.

Everything was in a flurry of excitement there.

The sailors were more or less worked up, not having the cool head of Captain Jobes to direct them.

At length the crisis came. There was a terrific crash, a mighty upheaval of blinding spray, and the gallant *Larkspur* rolled over on her beam ends, and quivered like an aspen.

Two of the mutineers were washed overboard, their ghastly faces and staring, unnatural eyes showing for a brief moment ere they sank to rise no more beneath the raging billows.

Ganzees was the last to leave the stranded ship, and he severed the rope at a single slash of his knife, bidding the men to pull on the oars for their lives.

The sailors bent to their oars with a will, and at length, after no little difficulty, they succeeded in effecting a landing upon the beach of the little island.

It was rather a wild-looking spot. The tropical trees and plants grew down to the very water's edge in the richest profusion.

Ganzees heaved a sigh of satisfaction as he made his way to the shelter of some tall, thick-boughed trees, which grew close at hand.

They had left the wrecked *Larkspur* in such haste that they had brought nothing with them save the guns, pistols and knives with which they were armed.

One of the seamen had some matches in a waterproof box with him, and collecting some dried boughs, they managed, after a deal of trouble, to start a fire, which gave forth more smoke than blaze.

With this they dried their clothing, and then, guns in hand, they started into the depths of the forest in search of some sort of game with which to allay their hunger, for, owing to the severeness of the storm they had just passed through, they had not eaten much for several hours.

They had made their way for perhaps a fourth of a mile inland, when a flock of some sort of fowls resembling quail was started.

The leader of the mutineers leveled his weapon, which was a muzzle-loading shotgun, and pulled the trigger.

Almost at the same instant that the report rang out, a wild yell was heard, followed by a violent tramping in the bushes.

The next moment a score of savage-looking natives appeared upon the scene, and surrounded the party.

Acting on a sudden impulse, Ganzees threw down his gun, and raised his hands in token of submission.

"Do the same as I do, every one of you!" he exclaimed, in an undertone, glancing hastily at his followers.

The mutineers were not a little frightened at the sudden appearance of the natives, but they obeyed their leader's instructions to the very letter.

The savages, who were Malays, seemed surprised at this move, and checked themselves in their rush.

"Hold up, my good fellows," said the mutineers' leader, in a mild tone; "we are friends, and don't mean any harm."

He hardly expected that his words would be understood, but much to his surprise, a big, burly Malay, who seemed to be the leader, answered, in fairly good English:

"What white men do here—where um ship?"

"Our ship lies out there on the reef, with a hole stove in her bottom," returned Ganzees, pointing in the direction of the wreck of the *Larkspur*.

"Um; good! Lay um guns down; Malays take um; white men go wif us; no kill if be good."

There was no alternative, so the mutineers submitted quietly to the proceedings, and presently they were being marched along through the forest in the midst of the band of lithe, savage Malays.

Half an hour's walk over a beaten path through the forest, and they came to a village of no mean size, considering the locality.

In the center of this was a large bamboo hut, and toward this Ganzees and his followers were marched.

As they neared it, a white man, attired in a gaudy Spanish costume, emerged through the doorway.

He was tall, and straight as an arrow, and had a stern, commanding look.

A crimson sash encircled his waist, into which was thrust innumerable pistols and knives.

As the Malays filed up with their white prisoners, the man in the doorway of the hut started, and drawing a heavy broadsword from his sheath, exclaimed:

"Ha! what have we here? A set of milk-sop sailors! What is your nationality—English or American?"

"We are all natives of the United States," promptly replied Ganzees.

"Perdition seize you, then! Do you know into whose clutches you have fallen?"

Ganzees vouchsafed no reply.

"I'll tell you, then," continued the gaudily-attired man, waving his sword over his head. "I am Juan Dacresa, the king of the Malay freebooters. Men, away with them! They are Americans, and they must die!"

The next moment the mutineers were seized by a perfect swarm of the Malay savages and hustled away from the spot.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MALAYS' ATTACK ON THE WRECK.

Jack Darling had no sooner disappeared through the hole in the ship's bottom when all hands began to grow uneasy.

What if the brave boy should lose his life in his daring attempt to get outside and set them at liberty?

They all had certain misgivings, and it was with anxious hearts that they waited to hear his feet upon the deck above their heads.

But the minutes flew by, and no signs of Jack yet.

Frank Hall shifted his position uneasily.

"What if a shark has gobbled up Jack, or the mutineers have got hold of him?" he said.

"Yes; or suppose he struck his head against a rock when he dove through the hole?" put in Larry O'Dowd.

"I don't think either of what you say has happened to him," said Captain Jobs. "I have faith that his venture will turn out all right."

"I hopes de Lor' dat he will git us out—deed I does," whined Pete, the darkey.

When probably fifteen minutes had passed, a commotion was heard on the deck, and the spirits of all hands arose as if by magic.

Thump! thump! thump!

Some one was pounding at the forward hatch.

That it was Jack Darling the inmates of the *Larkspur's* hold had not the least doubt.

Thump—crash! rip! and the cover was torn aside, allowing a stream of daylight into the hold.

The captain and his companions uttered a joyful shout and made a rush for the deck.

At that instant half a dozen dusky faces peered down at them through the hatch, causing them to start as though they had been shot.

Before they could comprehend the situation the owners of the dusky faces began piling into the hold like a lot of monkeys.

The inmates of the hold made a gallant stand; they knew that they had to fight for their lives, and consequently they braced themselves against the side of the ship, determined to die fighting.

As soon as they beheld the fierce Malays, they gave Jack Darling up for lost. As a matter of course, they judged that he had perished at the hands of the savages.

It soon became evident to Captain Jobs and his followers that the attacking party meant to take them alive!

As yet not a blow had been struck, though the Malays were all armed to the teeth.

This gave them a slight hope, and it was with anxious hearts that they awaited the result.

Pete, the cook, lay in a trembling heap at the feet of his companions, the picture of abject fear and cowardice.

The attitude of the darkey seemed to excite the extreme contempt of one of the savages, for giving vent to a guttural exclamation of disgust, he flung a short ax he carried full at the negro's form as it lay upon the floor of the hold.

It missed Pete's woolly head by about the width of a hair, and its keen edge buried itself in one of the timbers of the ship.

This was the first real sign of open hostilities, and stooping suddenly the captain seized the ax by its still quivering handle and raised it aloft in an attitude of defense.

For a moment the Malays hesitated, and then closing in together they made a rush at the little party.

Thud!

The ax in the hands of Captain Jobs descended with sickening force upon a savage's skull, cleaving it in twain.

But that was all. The next instant the brave little party were seized and quietly overpowered.

Then, in a jiffy, they were carried up on the deck and thrown in a heap on the lee side.

The dusky crowd then proceeded to enter the cabin and rummage about for what they could find.

The wind had now entirely died out, and the setting sun was showing its red disc as it sank below the horizon.

Its departing rays shone full upon the faces of the captives, bound hand and foot as they were; and as it sank from sight it seemed to them that their last hopes went with it.

Meanwhile, the Malays continued their work of pillaging the wrecked ship.

The deck was now strewn with empty boxes and barrels, their contents having been removed.

It was pitch dark ere they desisted in their work, and then stowing the best of the spoils they had seized upon in the proas, which were tied to the lee side of the wreck, they transferred the captives also, and then pushed off, making directly for an island close at hand.

In a few minutes this was reached, and a landing was made, after which they started over a beaten path through the thick, tropical forest.

The captives said never a word, but walked along as if resigned to their fate.

Presently they emerged through the tangled labyrinths of the woods into a large clearing, in the center of which was a good-sized village of bamboo and mud huts.

"The black villains must be a little bit civilized," remarked Larry O'Dowd; "they have houses—such as they are—to live in."

"Yes," answered Frank Hall, whose tall form loomed above the majority of those who surrounded him; "and I guess that large building in the square over there must be the king's palace, or something of that sort."

After a while his companions were able to distinguish the

building he referred to. It was rather a tall affair, considering the size of those that surrounded it, and was constructed entirely of bamboo canes.

A bright fire of some sort of resinous wood was blazing in front of it, before which was seated a man—the same who had sentenced the mutineers to death that very afternoon.

On seeing some of his dusky followers approaching with more white prisoners, Juan Dacresa arose and went through much the same ceremony as he had when Ganzees and his men had been brought before him.

Captain Jobes endeavored to explain matters to him, and told him the full story of the mutiny on the *Larkspur*, and how the mutineers had abandoned the ship and left them imprisoned in the hold.

During the captain's recital of the events which had just transpired, the face of the king of the Malay freebooters, as he chose to term himself, lit up with a look of extreme satisfaction.

"So ho," said he, "you are good men and the others are bad, then. I guess I shall have to revoke the sentence I passed upon the others. They might be of big service to me."

With these words, he motioned the captives to be led away, and seated himself before the fire again.

Our friends were then led a short distance to a hut, which contained but a single room, and quickly hustled into it.

The door was then firmly secured, and they were left to their own reflections.

For the space of fully five minutes no one spoke a word.

At last the darkey broke the silence.

"Oh, Lor! dey be agwine ter kill us in de mornin', suah! I wish Massa Jack was here, too," he moaned.

"What do you wish Jack was here for? So he could be killed, too?" asked Larry, half jokingly.

"No, sah; 'deed I don't. I t'ink maybe he find a way ter git us out o' here, dat's all."

"He tried to save our lives when he dove through the hole in the ship's side; and I have not the least doubt that he lost his own," said Captain Jobes, in a dejected tone.

"For my part, I shall never believe that Jack Darling is dead until I see his body," put in Frank. "You mark my words, and see if he don't turn up just when we need his services the most. We are not any of us dead yet, not by a jugful."

"It seems strange to hear you talk that way—you spoke so differently when we were confined in the *Larkspur's* hold," remarked Larry.

"Never mind if he do," said Bill Bunt, "he air right, all ther same."

"I hope so," said Larry and the captain, almost in the same breath.

All hands again relapsed into silence, and Larry O'Dowd began taking a survey of his surroundings.

There were lots of chinks in the sides of the hut, through which came the rays of a fire outside. This made a dim light in the single compartment, and its occupants could easily distinguish one another.

By and by a sense of drowsiness came over the inmates of the hut, and soon all—save Larry—had dropped off in a sound slumber.

The air seemed heavy and oppressive, and caused him to yawn; but he fought away the feeling, determined that he would keep awake.

But the queer feeling was a little bit too much for him; and before he knew it his head was nodding upon his breast.

Suddenly he awoke with a start.

It was lighter than ever in the hut.

Larry rubbed his eyes in dumfounded amazement.

He was the only person in the hut!

CHAPTER VII.

JACK MEETS WITH A STRANGE ADVENTURE.

It would be hard to describe the feeling that came over Jack Darling as he glanced over the waves and saw the rapidly-approaching proas loaded with armed Malays.

As a natural consequence, his first thought was to save himself from their clutches, if possible.

Exerting all the strength at his command, he struck out for the *Larkspur* with all his might.

But the tide was strongly against him, and at the end of

a minute he saw that it would be impossible for him to reach the wreck.

"It is life or death now," he thought, "and it would not do for me to board the *Larkspur* anyway, for it would be leading the savages upon my companions."

Jack counted seven of the long, narrow crafts coming over the waves, and he estimated that each must contain at least a dozen of the Malays.

The boy was now much nearer the shore than the wreck, so he turned half about and struck out in an oblique direction for the island.

One of the seven proas immediately started in pursuit of him, while the others continued on straight for the wrecked ship.

Jack now saw a chance of his reaching the shore first, and it put fresh strength in his body.

He had been in more than one swimming match with his school-fellows at home, but never before had he made such progress as he was now making.

On came the single boatload of savages, gaining steadily on the plucky boy, who was nearing the shore at every stroke of his powerful arms.

The Malays were now within a hundred and fifty yards of him, and rising to his feet in the bow of the proa, one of them leveled a musket at the swimmer and pulled the trigger.

Bang! The report rang out like that of a small cannon, showing that the weapon had been overloaded.

Ping! Swish! The bullet whizzed past our hero's ear, and struck the water a few feet ahead of him.

Jack was a good deal surprised that the savages should be in possession of such a thing as a gun, and he made up his mind that they must be a band of the Malay pirates he had often read about.

"Pirates or no pirates, they shan't catch me if I can prevent it," muttered Jack, as he dashed the spray from his face.

A few more strokes and his feet touched the sandy bottom.

Making a mighty effort, he struggled through the foaming breakers, and at length was out of their reach.

He was completely played out; but he quickly realized that if he wished to escape being captured by the Malays he must take to the woods and run for it.

Casting a look behind him to see how close his pursuers were, Jack darted into the mazes of the forest.

The Malays would not have been very far away from him had not a monster roller seized their proa and overturned it, just as they were about to make a landing.

This mishap delayed them for fully five minutes, and when once they had got started after the fleeing boy, he was nowhere to be seen.

On went Jack through the tangled undergrowth, not knowing whither he was going, but only thinking of getting to some safe place, where he might elude his savage pursuers.

The perspiration stood out in great beads upon his forehead, and he was breathing heavily.

He was undergoing a fearful strain; the exciting swim he had just gone through had been enough to try both his nerve and wind, but it would never do to give up now.

It was now near nightfall, and Jack's hopes began to rise, as the noise made by his pursuers was gradually dying out.

Ten minutes passed, and they had lost the track altogether.

Jack now came to a halt in the gathering darkness.

The air was beginning to grow chilly, and a strange, awful stillness pervaded the forest.

Presently the sharp cry of a night bird rang out very close at hand.

Jack started. He was beginning to feel very uncomfortable.

In less than ten minutes after the sun had gone down it was pitch dark in the woods.

It was gradually growing cooler, too, and the atmosphere was heavy with moisture.

The boy could not see his hand before his face.

He was at a loss which way to turn.

Suddenly a low, guttural growl was heard, and Jack started as if he had been shot.

There was a rustle in the bushes close at hand, and he beheld a fiery pair of eyeballs glaring at him through the darkness.

Wor-r-ough! worough!

The next moment some sort of an animal stood directly in front of him, ready to spring.

Jack's knowledge of beasts quickly told him that it was a savage bloodhound that confronted him.

A sickening sensation came over him, and he gave himself up for lost.

But just at the very moment he expected the terrible beast to seize him by the throat and bear him to the earth, something very unexpected happened.

The figure of a female, robed in some light-colored material, sprang between the boy and the dog.

"Down, Carlo, down!" exclaimed a sweet but commanding voice, in a low tone.

The bloodhound instantly ceased to growl, and sank to the ground as passive as a lamb.

Then, before Jack could divine the intentions of the young girl—for girl it certainly was—a rifle, revolver and knife were placed in his hands, and a voice whispered in his ear:

"Take refuge in a tree until morning, and then take the rising sun for a guide and make for the shore. A small sailboat will be there in a little cove, which you must take and sail due southeast until you strike the coast of Sumatra. A compass and provisions will be in the boat. Now remember and do as I say; you are on dangerous ground while you remain upon this island. Adieu!"

The next moment both girl and bloodhound had vanished in the thick bushes.

For several moments Jack Darling stood like one in a dream. He could scarcely realize that he was awake. But there were the weapons in his possession that the girl had given him, and that was abundant proof that it was no vision.

Jack had not seen the girl's face, but he had fallen in love with her voice.

He determined to know more about her.

Disregarding the instructions given him entirely, he struck out in the bushes, through the darkness, in the direction the girl and the dog had gone.

"I am going to find out who she is and what she is doing here," he muttered, as he gripped the rifle firmly by the stock, "and I will never leave this place until I do!"

Away went our hero, crashing through the undergrowth regardless of the sharp briars he came in contact with or the noise he made.

He had but one thought now, and that was to learn more about the fair one who had befriended him.

All thoughts of caution had left him, and he plunged ahead though he could not hear a sound of the girl and her bloodhound.

At length he emerged into an open space in the starlight.

Jack came to a halt.

Before him was a high wall of stone, which was unquestionably the side of some sort of a mammoth building.

This seemed queer in that part of the country.

Jack rubbed his eyes.

Then, before he knew what had happened, the earth opened at his feet, and with a low cry he disappeared from sight.

CHAPTER VIII.

LARRY MAKES HIS ESCAPE.

Larry O'Dowd held his breath for fully the space of a minute, when he saw that he was the only one in the hut.

Where could his companions have gone to?

It seemed but a few minutes before that he had seen them sleeping soundly in various attitudes upon the floor.

Larry was nonplused at the strangeness of the thing, and it set his brain in a whirl to endeavor to account for it.

At length he got upon his hands and knees and began crawling about the compartment.

Search about as he might, he could find no place that led from the hut save the single door, and that was firmly fastened on the outside.

"I must have been asleep longer than I thought, and the heathens must have removed my companions while I was dozing," muttered the boy. "Strange they didn't take me, though; I can't imagine why—"

At that moment the noise of approaching footsteps was heard outside.

Larry started.

"They are coming back after me," he thought; "well, all right; I'll go with them as peaceably as possible."

There was some one at the door now, and Larry was waiting to

see some of the Malays enter, when his ears were startled by the noise of a dull thud in the hut behind him, followed by the distant sound of rapidly-retreating footsteps.

Turning around, the boy beheld an opening of about two feet square in one corner of the hut, by the side of which was a slab of stone.

For a moment he was so surprised that he hardly knew what to do; then a sudden idea struck him.

Making a sudden spring, he reached the square opening, and quickly lowered himself into it just as the door of the hut opened.

He found himself in a narrow passage of about six feet in height, as dark as the grave itself.

Acting on a sudden impulse, he reached up, and seizing the stone slab, pulled it over in its place, covering the opening effectually.

He was not a second too soon in doing this, for half a dozen Malays had already entered the hut, and they listened in surprise at the noise made by the stone falling back in its place, though they knew not where the sound came from.

The dusky villains stared at each other in blank surprise at finding the hut empty, and after searching every inch of the room with no satisfactory result, they left the hut to report the strange occurrence to their king.

Meanwhile Larry stood stock still in his tracks in the passage beneath the hut, undecided which way to turn.

Larry O'Dowd was quick to arrive at a conclusion, and it soon became clear to his mind that it was through this passage that his companions had left the hut.

It occurred to him to follow the passage, and see where it led to.

"Well, here goes," muttered the plucky boy. "I'll fetch out somewhere, anyhow; and it is most likely that I will find Frank and the rest. Good-by, you heathens up there. I'm off."

Larry then started cautiously down the passage.

It was dark as a pocket, and the boy, unarmed as he was, was not a little nervous.

But what he lacked in the line of weapons he made up in courage, and he pushed resolutely ahead.

The passage was so narrow that in many places his shoulders touched on either side. The walls, too, were damp and slimy, greatly adding to the unpleasantness of the place.

Occasionally his feet would strike a slight pool of water, and then it would be a continual strip of sandy bottom for a number of yards.

Five minutes passed by. It did not seem that he was anywhere near the outlet yet.

"This is getting deuced unpleasant," muttered Larry. "It is high time I was getting out of here."

That it was a slight down grade that he was traveling, he felt certain.

Suddenly, just as he was thinking that he was never going to bring up anywhere, he ran plump against what appeared to be an iron door.

Clang!

It had been slightly ajar, and the sudden force with which he came in contact with it forced it shut with a slam.

"I guess I have done it now," exclaimed Larry, under his breath. "But, ah! I have it. They didn't take my match-safe from me. I'll see what it looks like here. It's a wonder I never thought of it before."

The next moment he struck a match, and held its flame above his head.

Before him was a solid iron door, which opened toward him.

Before the light from the flaming lucifer had died out, he had seized hold of the ponderous knob, at the same time pulling it gently toward him.

The next moment the massive door swung open, and a sudden draught extinguished the flickering match.

In a brief instant he had caught a glimpse of a large, cellar-like apartment, and he determined to see more of it.

Striking another match, he held his hand before it to keep the draught from blowing it out, and boldly entered through the now open doorway.

He found himself in what appeared to be the cellar of a large structure built of stone.

Above his head was a floor composed of plank, which rested upon heavy oaken beams nearly rotten with age.

The cellar, or whatever it might be called, was about thirty

feet square, and had two doorways, beside the one he came through, leading from it.

Each of these had a flight of stone steps leading upward from it.

Larry was becoming more puzzled than ever.

Judging by the looks of the building he was in, it must have been in existence for ages.

"Now," thought Larry, "the question is, which flight of steps will I take to find my way to freedom?"

At that moment his second match burned down to his fingers and went out, leaving him again in darkness.

Hastily lighting another, he entered the nearest doorway, and began ascending the flight of stone steps.

In a very short space of time he arrived at the top.

A closed door barred his further progress.

He tried it. The door was locked, and he could not move it the breadth of a hair.

But this did not discourage the boy. Making his way down the steps, he entered the other door, and began rapidly ascending the steps leading from it.

When he had arrived at the top his fourth match went out, and he quietly struck another.

There was a door similar to the other before him, and a moment's glance sufficed to show Larry that it was ajar.

Quickly pushing it open, he found himself on the threshold of an apartment similar to the one he had just come from.

"This is queer," muttered the boy; "it seems that this place is all cellars."

At that moment a strange noise came to his ears.

It sounded like a groan.

Larry gave a start.

There was somebody in the room with him, but the light from his match did not extend far enough for him to distinguish anybody.

He took a few steps forward and held the burning match above his head.

Larry uttered a cry.

Before him lay the body of Jack Darling!

CHAPTER IX.

THE MALAYS' ATTACK ON A MERCHANTMAN.

"Jack! Jack! are you alive?" exclaimed Larry O'Dowd, dropping upon his knees by the side of our hero's form upon the floor.

A low groan came from Jack's lips.

But this told Larry that he was alive, and he began chafing his hands in his endeavor to bring him back to full consciousness.

Presently our hero opened his eyes, but all was in darkness, and he could see nothing.

"Where am I?" he gasped. "Where has the girl gone? Oh! I remember it all now; I fell somewhere. Who are you? Let go my hands; I'm all right now."

He made a move to rise to his feet.

"Jack, don't you know me? It is I—Larry O'Dowd."

And hastily striking a match, he proceeded to verify his words.

Jack Darling gazed at him in mute astonishment for a moment, and then seized him warmly by the hand.

"In the name of goodness how came you here?" he asked, as he arose to his feet.

"I might ask you the same question, old fellow," replied Larry; "but before any explanations are made on either side I want to know if you are hurt."

"No—only bruised slightly, I guess. I remember the ground giving way beneath my feet, and then striking heavily upon my side. After that all was blank until you brought me to my senses."

"Go on and finish your story, and then I'll tell mine," said Larry.

"All right," answered Jack.

And he proceeded to relate what had happened to him since he had left the wrecked *Larkspur*.

If Larry was surprised at the recital of the story, Jack was doubly so when he had heard his.

"I am inclined to think that this island is a queer place," said Jack.

"You are right," replied Larry. "Now, what do you say if we make some sort of a move to get out of here?"

"I am willing."

"Come on, then."

Larry struck another match, and the two boys, so strangely reunited, proceeded to search about the apartment in quest of a place of egress.

Up to the present time Jack had seen or heard nothing of the girl and her bloodhound; nor had Larry heard any more of the person who had raised the slab in the hut and then fled through the passage at the approach of the Malays.

Both boys were more than puzzled at the strange events that had taken place, and they could not make out, for the life of them, what had become of Frank Hall and the rest of their companions.

A little way to the right of them they observed a door.

Jack at once proceeded to try it.

It was open.

Bidding Larry to follow him, he made his way through it.

The boys found themselves in a narrow, hall-like passage, at the foot of which was a flight of stairs, leading upward.

Without any hesitation they began boldly to ascend it.

Before they were halfway up the stairs, Jack, who was in the lead, uttered a cry.

"Hurrah!" he shouted; "I see daylight."

"Good!" said Larry; "we will soon be able to get out, then."

It was daylight, sure enough. When they arrived at the top of the flight of stairs they found themselves in a broad room, with several windows, through which the first rays of the rising sun streamed in.

Jack hurried to one of the windows, quickly followed by Larry.

Through a break in the dense forest the boys had an excellent view of Old Sol as he arose from the crest of the sea, and cast his mellow light upon the dew-kissed foliage of the tropical trees.

The sight was a grand one, and for a few moments the boys were lost in admiration at it.

Suddenly Jack gave a start.

"Look!" he exclaimed.

On the open sea in front of them they beheld a ship under full sail.

But that was not all. Bearing down upon her, from half a dozen different points, was a score of proas, loaded with Malays, armed to the teeth.

In the bow of the leading boat Larry detected the form of Juan Dacresa, the king of the Malay freebooters.

That the ship was a merchantman the boy saw at a glance.

All was in confusion upon her deck, and the crew were making every effort to escape the danger that threatened them.

But there was little or no breeze stirring, and her sails flapped idly in the wind.

Jack and Larry gazed intently at the sight.

They were anxious to see the result.

Nearer and nearer the Malays drew upon their prey, the proa in which sat Juan Dacresa leading by a good length.

When the dark-skinned pirates were within a hundred yards of the ship, the crew fired a volley from a dozen muskets at them.

This was the signal for general hostilities to begin.

The volley from the ship's crew did no more damage than to wound one of the Malays, and then the king of the freebooters, as he called himself, arose in his proa, and gave the command to answer the fire.

Crack! crack! c-r-a-c-k!

The reports of twenty or more muskets blended into one, and three of the brave seamen upon the ship fell to the deck to rise no more.

"My God!" gasped Larry; "they will get the best of the ship as sure as fate."

"That you can depend upon," replied Jack. "They are used to that sort of work, and tackle only such ships as they think will prove a sure and easy victim for them."

"Look!" exclaimed Larry, who had not taken his eyes from the scene of the conflict; "they are getting ready to board her."

He was right. The next instant half a dozen of the proas were alongside the ship, and the dusky attacking party began to climb nimbly up her chains.

The crew made a gallant stand to repel them, but they were outnumbered ten to one, and they made but poor resistance.

A minute or two more and the remaining proas had arrived at her side, and the ship's deck now literally swarmed with the Malays.

Then ensued a scene which made the two boys turn sick with horror.

The huge cutlasses in the hands of the pirates flashed in the sunlight and descended upon the heads and bodies of the captain and crew, making a sickening spectacle.

So vivid was the scene that the two boys almost imagined that they could hear the thuds the weapons made as they descended upon their victims.

"Terrible—terrible!" exclaimed Jack; "oh, what villains they must be!"

"Of all I ever read or dreamed of, I never expected to have the opportunity of seeing real pirates; and now that I have seen them, I wish that I had not," said Larry.

"No; you are right. This we have just witnessed is a sickening sight. Ah! see—they are hauling down the flag; the whole thing is now over."

"What nation does the ship belong to?" asked Larry. "I can't make out what flag it is."

"She is a Danish bark, I think, as near as I can make out," replied our hero. "See! a breeze is springing up; in another minute she will be behind those trees and out of our sight."

The boy was right, and presently they were gazing upon naught save the clear ocean.

"Come," said Jack; "you take this revolver and I will keep the rifle and knife given me by the girl, and we will see if we can get out of here."

"Lead on—I'll follow."

"Stop right where you are!"

The words rang out in a stern, commanding tone of voice.

The two boys nearly jumped out of their skins.

Turning about, they beheld a heavy-bearded man, with a revolver in either hand.

CHAPTER X.

THE MUTINEERS JOIN THE PIRATES.

It was noon on the day following the arrival of the mutineers in the freebooters' village before they were brought forth from the hut they had been placed in.

They were at once taken before Juan Dacresa, who seemed to be rather pleased when he saw them.

"Ha!" said he, as he saluted them, "so you did not disappear like the rest did last night? Know you aught of them?"

"Who?" asked Ganzees.

"Why, the ones you left imprisoned in the hold of the wrecked ship. We captured them, and they were placed securely in a hut similar to the one you have just come out of; and when some of my men stepped in to look after them toward morning they had disappeared as if by magic."

"Well, that beats me," exclaimed the mutineer leader, evincing not a little surprise. "If they have got away they may give you a little trouble before you recapture them."

"I guess it won't be long before we get hold of them again, though how they got out of the hut is a mystery. Just as soon as they are caught they shall roast over a slow fire, to pay for the trouble they have caused. I have said it, and those who are acquainted with Juan Dacresa know that he always keeps his word."

"That will be a well-deserved fate," said Ganzees, a fiendish expression crossing his countenance as he spoke.

The king of the freebooters was not slow to notice this, and if he had any doubts of the character of Ganzees before, they were all washed away now.

He saw in him a villain as bad as himself.

"What did you say your name was, my man?" he asked, as he keenly eyed Ganzees.

The mutineer hastened to reply.

"Aha!" said Juan Dacresa, "a queer name, but I guess you will do. How would you and your men like to join my band and fight under me?"

"It would suit me to a 'T.' What say you, men?" and Ganzees turned to his followers.

"Ay, ay! we will, captain," exclaimed the villains, in a chorus.

"Very well," said the king of the Malay freebooters, "prepare to take the oath, for I shall require an iron-clad oath from all of you."

"We are ready now, sir," replied Ganzees, touching his cap respectfully.

"All right. I shall endeavor to make the ceremony as impressive as possible, and, I think, when you have once become a fol-

lower of me, none of you will have cause to regret your step. It is scarcely an hour since we captured a rich prize in the shape of a Danish bark. The crew made a slight resistance, but we quickly sent them, to a man, to Davy Jones' locker, as you sailors say, and lost but three men on our side. I can tell you, men, it is a fine life to be a freebooter, though it is oftentimes dangerous; but I flatter myself on being a good leader, and I have never heard a single complaint from any of my followers. Make ready to take the oath."

The king then stepped to a knot of the Malays, and addressed them in a tongue unknown to the mutineers.

The result of it was that after saluting their leader, about a dozen of the Malays entered the bamboo hut—or house it could be called, as it was quite large and contained a number of rooms.

The mutineers were a bit curious to learn what sort of proceedings they would have to go through, and they anxiously awaited to see what there was in store for them.

After about ten minutes had passed, one of the Malays—a lithe, active-looking fellow—made his appearance at the main doorway and spoke something in his own tongue to the king.

"Come," said he, "we are now ready for you to take the oath."

"We are ready," replied Ganzees, with his usual calmness; "proceed."

Then, single file, the mutineers followed Juan Dacresa into the hut, along a narrow hallway to a rear room.

The room in question was furnished in all the luxury of an Oriental palace, evidently some of the booty from the many successful captures made by the pirates.

In the center of this elegantly-furnished apartment was a handsome altar of polished marble, inlaid with what appeared to be precious stones.

On the top of the altar was a golden urn, filled with a dark-looking powder, which the pirate king hastened to ignite with his lighted cigarette.

Instantly a cloud of dense smoke pervaded the room, which sent forth such a balmy, rich perfume that for a moment the mutineers almost felt their senses leaving them.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Juan Dacresa; "the incense is too much for you, eh? Well, I will change it."

He threw a pinch of whitish-looking powder in the urn, and the smoke instantly ceased to rise from it. Then such an exhilarating perfume arose from it that the mutineers could scarcely restrain from jumping out of their clothes.

Their nostrils dilated like those of a race horse at the signal to start, and their whole bodies seemed endowed with new life.

"Gad!" exclaimed Ganzees, "it is worth five years of a man's life to feel like this. Oh, king, you are indeed the greatest of great men. It is the highest honor that could possibly be conferred upon us to become members of your band."

The handsome face of the king lit up with a satisfied smile. Like most mortals, he was not averse to being praised.

At length he spoke.

"I am glad you think so," said he; "and now I will proceed to administer the oath of allegiance to my band—it is very short, and will not take up much time. You will all of you assemble around the altar here and raise your right hands, and repeat after me the following obligations."

Ganzees and his men did as they were bid, and the pirate king continued:

"I do solemnly swear by all that is holy, or unholy, and by the memory of the mother who bore me, that I will obey every command of my leader, even if it be to sever the heart-strings of my dearest friend, and that I will never desert Juan Dacresa's band of freebooters so long as there is a drop of blood in my veins; and if I fail to keep this oath, may I be torn limb from limb and be fed to the wild beasts of the forest."

The mutineers went over this obligation together, like school-boys repeating a lesson, but it could plainly be seen by the expression of their faces that they fully realized the import of the terrible oath.

When they had repeated the last word, the pirate king suddenly reached forth his hand and touched a small bell.

Instantly the Malays who were present vacated the room, and a few moments later a woman entered with a tray containing a couple of decanters of wine, some glasses, fruit and a box of choice cigars.

"Now, men, join me in a toast," said the pirate king, as he filled the glasses. "May our band of freebooters prosper and hold together for ages after we are dead and gone; and may each in-

dividual member of it become as rich as old King Solomon ever dreamed of being."

"Ay, ay!" exclaimed the mutineers, as they drained their glasses.

"Now," said Ganzees, as the king refilled the glasses, "I propose a toast to our king. May he live to see the last man in his band die, and may he never know what care is!"

Again the glasses were emptied, and instantly filled up again with the wine, which was the very best, to say the least of it.

The villainous sailors of the *Larkspur* soon began to "feel good," as the saying goes, and noticing this, the king motioned them to a table at the further end of the room, at the same time handing them a deck of cards and one of the decanters of wine.

"There, men, enjoy yourselves while you may. Life is but short, to say the least, and while you are making merry I will talk to Mr. Ganzees, whom I have taken a great liking to."

The mutineers expressed their thanks in their rough way, and immediately repaired to the table designated, leaving the king and Ganzees at a small, marble-topped stand, near a richly-curtained window, through which came the sound of the roar of the sea in the distance.

"Now, then," said Juan Dacresa, as he lighted a cigar, "I want to tell you something which I have told no one as yet. It will ease my mind somewhat and make me feel better; and, as I said before, I have taken a strong liking to you. For the past week there have been strange things happening upon this island, and I am inclined to believe that I have secret enemies here, or else"—and his voice lowered to a whisper—"the old stone cathedral in the forest is haunted!"

"Haunted, did you say?" laughed Ganzees; "surely such an intelligent man as you don't believe in ghosts?"

Juan Dacresa shook his head.

"At any rate," he continued, "a strange man, a girl and a bloodhound have been seen by my men at different times during the past few days, and it is utterly impossible to catch them, for they vanish from sight before your very eyes!"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Ganzees; "a trick of some sort. I will wager that in less than a week's time I will get at the bottom of the affair."

"If you do," and the king leaned forward to make his words more impressive; "if you clear up this mystery to my full satisfaction, I will make you next to me in command; and I will also be firmly convinced that there are no such things as ghosts, though that such things did exist in the time of my forefathers I do believe."

Ganzees chuckled inwardly. He could read the man before him like a book, and he saw that his one weak point was that he was superstitious.

"As I said before," said he, "I will guarantee to clear up this mystery inside of a week. I furthermore will wager that I——"

He did not finish the sentence, for at that moment a missile whizzed between the heads of the two villains and struck the floor in the center of the room.

The next moment a deafening explosion rang out, and the room was filled with a blinding smoke.

CHAPTER XI.

JACK STARTS ON A TOUR OF INVESTIGATION.

Jack Darling and Larry O'Dowd stood as if transfixed for a moment. They had been so engrossed in witnessing the fight between the pirates and the ship that they had failed to notice the least sound.

Consequently, when they beheld a pair of revolvers in the hands of a stranger, leveled at them, they were dumfounded for a moment.

Jack was the first to find the use of his tongue.

"Hold up, mister," said he, "we are friends."

What had prompted him to say this he knew not, but it had the effect of causing the man to lower his weapons, while at the same time he gave the boys a keen, scrutinizing look.

"You are friends, you say—of whom?"

For a moment Jack was at a loss what reply to make, but he was a bold, nerry young fellow, and he made up his mind to speak just what he thought, no matter what the consequences might be.

"We are friends to honest people and those who do right," he

said, after a slight pause, during which the stranger's eyes never left them.

"Shake hands, young men. I believe what you say is true," and he extended his right hand, which the boys shook warmly.

"Have you seen any strangers besides us?" asked Larry.

"Describe them, boy, and then perhaps I can tell you."

"There were four of them—two men, a boy, rather tall, and a negro. They——"

"Hold on, my boy. Which of you is Larry O'Dowd?"

"I am," promptly replied Larry.

"Then you are the boy who was left in the hut, then? And you," said the man, turning to our hero, "are——"

"Jack Darling."

"Good! This is indeed glorious news! Come, my boys; I have seen your friends, and I will take you to them at once. Follow me."

It was with a feeling of indescribable joy that the boys followed the stranger through the doorway he had entered when he had so suddenly come upon them.

Out through a broad hall, which smelled musty and damp, and along this for a dozen feet or more, when their guide came to a sudden halt.

The boys looked in wonder at him, as there was no door or opening near the spot.

But the stranger knew what he was about. Pressing what seemed to be a nail-head on the hard wall, a click was heard.

The next instant a panel slid noiselessly back, disclosing a small opening, through which a man could easily pass.

"Enter," said their guide.

Without uttering a word, the boys did so.

The stranger quickly followed, and then the panel glided back in its place without the least bit of a sound.

The three were now in a small, dark closet, and Jack and Larry were just wondering what was going to happen next, when the man suddenly opened a door, and a flood of light streamed in.

The boys saw a good-sized, well-furnished room, with a number of people in it.

Jack and Larry could hardly suppress a cry of joy.

Before them were their late companions of the *Larkspur's* hold. The next moment there was a general handshaking all around, and for a time no one spoke a word.

It seemed almost too good to be true, that all hands should meet, alive and well, again.

Yet it was a fact, nevertheless.

At this point the boys saw that there was somebody else in the room.

Jack started, and rubbed his eyes.

Standing in one corner of the apartment, her hand resting upon the back of a chair in an idle manner, was a young girl of not more than seventeen, who to him seemed the most beautiful picture that could be imagined or dreamed of.

For a moment he could not take his eyes from her. It seemed to him that he had seen her before.

At that moment a low growl came from behind the chair, and a monster bloodhound stalked forth.

"Down, Carlo, down! They are friends," said the girl, in a musical but commanding voice.

Then it all came to our hero like a flash.

This was the girl and dog he had met in the forest the night before.

His face lighted up for a moment, and then turned to a deep crimson hue, and he could not find the use of his tongue for the life of him, though he desired to say something.

At this juncture the man who had led them to the room came to his relief.

"Gentlemen, this is my niece, Carrie Heathcoate. She has come all the way from England with me, to assist in avenging the death of her father and mother."

Both boys nodded in rather an awkward manner, and the girl extended her hand to each in turn.

"If I'm not mistaken," stammered Jack, "I met you last night. Am I not right?"

"You are," returned the girl. "It was I that met you in the forest and threw the weapons at your feet. I saw you as you escaped from the savages, and rightly judged that you belonged to the wrecked ship. I also saw that you were unarmed, and waited for a chance to give you my own weapons; I then told you to stay where you were for the night and that in the morning you would find a boat with which to leave the island. But you fol-

lowed after me, and I now find that it is all for the better, since your party makes an excellent addition to my uncle's small force."

The girl talked in such a sweet voice that Jack was sorry when she ceased speaking.

"Right you are, Carrie," said her uncle, "they will help us—Captain Jobs has promised that," and then he paced up and down the room in a nervous way.

Suddenly he stopped.

"Boys," said he, "I have already told my story to Captain Jobs, and he, in turn, will tell it to you, for he can do it better than I can at present."

So saying, the man, whose name was Robert Heathcoate, opened a door and entered an adjoining room.

As soon as he was gone, his niece spoke.

"I will tell the story in full, if you have no objections," said she. "There are some things that my uncle has left out."

"Certainly, we have no objections," replied Jack; "proceed."

Carrie Heathcoate's story, in full, consisted of the following details:

Four years before, her father and mother had been murdered by Juan Dacresa's band of pirates. The ship they were on, which was bound for China, was captured and completely gutted by the lawless band, and all save one was murdered.

That one who lived made his escape, and after many hardships and innumerable perils arrived back in England.

That man was Robert Heathcoate, the only brother to Carrie's murdered father.

From that moment he became a changed man. It seemed that his thoughts ran in but one channel from that time on. He owned quite a large estate in Devonshire, and he at once converted this into money. Then he began to rack his brain to find a way to avenge the untimely death of his brother and his wife, which had left Carrie, who was at home in charge of her government at the time, an orphan.

Being an inventive sort of a genius, his brain at last hit upon an idea.

He would build a boat after his own idea, and repair to the pirates' island, and never leave it until he had exterminated them from the face of the earth.

He proceeded to put his idea into effect, and at length, after nearly four years of failures, he at last succeeded and constructed a boat propelled by a petroleum engine.

It was a long, narrow craft, built entirely of iron, and sat very low in the water.

In speed he calculated that the boat would outdistance anything that ran by steam power.

This curious vessel, which was named the *Avenger*, was stored with all sorts of contrivances of a chemical and electrical nature; also with an immense stock of firearms of the latest improved manufacture.

Then, after all this was accomplished, the eccentric man determined that he would do the work he had before him alone.

But no. Another thought struck him. He would take the daughter of his murdered brother with him, to assist him in carrying out his vengeance.

He at once explained the situation to Carrie, and asked her to accompany him.

After a deal of persuasion, she at last consented to go with him, providing that he allowed Carlo, the bloodhound, which had been her pet ever since he was a puppy, to accompany her; and that he would also take Lewis, the butler, and his wife with him.

At first Robert Heathcoate would not hear to this, but he gradually came down to it, and at length it was all settled.

The *Avenger* was furnished with all the luxury of a gentleman's pleasure yacht, and one night when the stars seemed to shine brighter than usual upon the shores of England the party which was to start on the voyage for vengeance boarded the singular-looking craft.

Heathcoate had found almost at the very time of starting that he would never be able to run the *Avenger* alone—that is, all the time, at least—so he hired an engineer by the name of Darrel to go with him.

This man was sober, honest and industrious, and he received good pay for the risk he would be apt to run among the Malay pirates.

Their voyage to the pirates' island had been an uneventful one, and they had arrived unbeknown to Juan Dacresa's band.

When Robert Heathcoate had made his escape from the free-

booters' village, he had done so through the passage which Larry O'Dowd had come through.

Why the passage was there, and who had made it, he never knew, nor did he care, so long as it led him to liberty.

He judged that it must have been constructed ages before, at the time the cathedral-like edifice had been built.

But, at any rate, the pirates knew nothing of it, and his escape had always remained a mystery to them.

Heathcoate had also discovered different secret passages and doorways in the old building, and he at once proceeded to take up his abode in the place as soon as he arrived, feeling sure that the Malays would never discover them, even if they searched the place from top to bottom.

The *Avenger* was hidden in a little creek at the shore, safe from prying eyes, with some one always aboard of her.

It had been ten days since her arrival, and as yet Robert Heathcoate had not done much in his work of vengeance.

But he was preparing for it all the while, and when he did it he intended to make things as mysterious as possible and at the same time accomplish his purpose.

It had been he that had spirited Larry's companions away while the boy slept; and when he returned for him he had opened the way for him, and fled on the approach of the Malays.

Jack and Larry listened in amazement at the recital of these events, while the rest were deeply interested, they not having heard all these facts from Robert Heathcoate.

For several minutes after Carrie had ceased speaking a deep silence reigned in the room.

Jack was just about to make a remark of some sort, when the door to the adjoining apartment opened, and the girl's uncle came in.

For a moment he glanced around the room at its occupants, and then his eyes rested upon Jack.

"You are the one I want," he said. "Come!"

"What do you want me to do?" asked our hero.

"I want you to go on a tour of investigation with me. Will you go?"

"Certainly I will. I will do anything that will aid you and your niece. Lead on!"

Waving his hand in token of a short farewell, Robert Heathcoate left the room through the secret passage, followed by Jack Darling.

CHAPTER XII.

FRANK HALL ACTS STRANGELY.

Carrie Heathcoate arose to her feet as soon as Jack and her uncle had gone out.

"You must not mind the actions of my uncle," said she. "He takes very queer notions, and sometimes I think that his brain is just the least bit upset; he seems to have his whole soul centered upon ridding the world of Juan Dacresa and his murderous followers."

"I think your uncle is a strange man, but still I am sure that he knows exactly what he is doing, for all that," said Captain Jobs.

"You kin jist bet he does!" put in Bill Bunt.

"Sure," interposed Larry, "he has an eye like a hawk; and look at his broad, high forehead—you can bet your last dollar that he is all right."

"I think," said Frank Hall, "that he will never rest easy again until he has accomplished his purpose; and, judging from what I have heard and what I know, I've not the least doubt but that he will."

"De bestest t'ing de massa kin do is ter git aboard his boat an' take us wif him away from dis drefful place, an' leave de pirates alone. Den nobody will git killed!" whined Pete, the cook.

"He will never do that, I am certain," said Carrie. "No! when we leave this island it will be when Juan Dacresa's band is broken up, and not before."

Captain Jobs drew his watch from his pocket.

"What time is it?" asked Larry.

"It is now twelve o'clock," replied the captain.

"Our dinner must be nearly ready, then. Pshaw! I don't see why uncle did not wait until after he and your friend had eaten something."

She had scarcely ceased speaking when there came a gentle tap upon the door which led into the adjoining room.

"Come," she exclaimed; "dinner is ready now."

With one accord all hands followed her, and presently they were seated before a bountiful repast, and being waited upon by the butler and his wife.

Pete, of course, waited until the rest were through, after which he made himself useful by assisting in washing the dishes.

"Now, suppose we go down aboard the *Avenger*," said the girl.

"Isn't there any danger of us being seen by the Malays?" asked Captain Jobes.

"No, not in the least, seeing that there is a tunnel under the earth that leads to within a few feet of where she lies."

All hands looked in surprise.

"This is indeed a wonderful place," said Frank Hall.

"It air nothin' else," replied Bill Bunt.

Selecting a small rifle from a rack in a corner of the room, the girl donned her hat, and then led the way down a narrow flight of steps, accompanied by the dog, who had now grown rather friendly with all hands.

Pete, at his own request, remained behind with the butler and his wife.

Down went the steps, until they numbered a hundred, and then they found themselves in a small, dark room.

Carrie now opened an iron door, and holding a lighted torch above her head, led the way into a tunnel-like passage similar to the one that came from beneath the bamboo hut in the freebooters' village.

The passage was damp and musty, but they did not mind this in the least.

Wonder and amazement at the strangeness of the thing kept their spirits up to the top notch.

Presently, when they had probably traveled half of the distance through the tunnel, Frank Hall slipped and fell heavily to the ground, striking the side of his head against a sharp stone as he did so.

Larry and Bill Bunt raised him up. He was breathing heavily and his eyes were closed.

Suddenly, without a moment's warning, he sprang to his feet and shook himself from their grasp and began to laugh boisterously in an idiotic manner.

"What's the matter, Frank, old boy?" asked Larry, a shade of astonishment crossing his countenance.

But Frank made no reply. His tall form seemed to tower to more than its usual height, and his eyes seemed to have a vacant stare.

"Did you hurt your head?" asked Captain Jobes, attempting to place his hand upon the boy's shoulder.

With a sudden strength, that seemed almost superhuman, Frank flung him aside as easily as if he had been a child, and then uttering a screaming, senseless laugh, darted down the passage, through the darkness, at a breakneck pace.

For a moment the little party stood looking at each other in mute astonishment.

"What has come over the boy?" gasped the captain, when he at last found the use of his tongue.

"What has come over him? I'll tell you what has come over him. He air as mad as a March hare, that's what he air," said Bill Bunt.

"I am inclined to think you are about right, Mr. Bunt," exclaimed Carrie, as she once more raised her blazing torch aloft.

"Let's go on after him and endeavor to catch him," suggested Larry. "Poor fellow! he may dash his brains out against some rock!"

"Well said, my boy," remarked Captain Jobes. "Lead on, Miss Carrie."

The next moment all hands were making their way rapidly down the passage.

Pit-a-pat; pit-a-pat! The retreating footsteps of Frank Hall could still be heard in the distance, but soon they died out entirely.

"He has reached the shore," said Carrie. "Come on; the engineer aboard the *Avenger* may take him for a foe and shoot him."

These words nerved the others to put on fresh speed, and in a minute or so they had reached the mouth of the tunnel.

There was the broad ocean before them, with four or five green looking isles in the distance, and on a strip of sandy beach a few rods to the left they beheld the tall form of Frank Hall, running like a deer toward no particular destination.

"I am going to catch him," exclaimed Larry. "Go and board the *Avenger*. I will be back on this spot in half an hour."

Then, before his companions could make a reply he had started on a run after the fleeing boy who had been struck so suddenly with some sort of a mania.

Straight along the strip of sandy beach went the tall form of Frank, and after him, gaining slowly, but surely, came Larry.

Suddenly Frank turned his head and saw that he was pursued. Uttering a wild, maniacal yell, he turned abruptly to his left and dashed into the forest.

On went Larry, until he had arrived at the spot where the boy had turned in, and then picking up the plain trail made by him, he started in anew.

The foliage at this point was very dense, and the bushes grew in a tangled maze.

The gayly plumaged birds in the leafy boughs overhead stopped their singing for a moment, and gazed in wonder at pursued and pursuer.

At times Frank would come almost down to a walk, and then Larry would rapidly overtake him.

But just as he would get ready to place his hand upon his shoulder, the seemingly demented boy would make a sudden leap, and dash away again with lightning speed.

Larry was beginning to grow tired, but Frank was, apparently, as fresh as ever.

Presently Frank disappeared altogether in a thick, tangled maze.

It was at least two minutes before Larry could break his way through, and when he did so a novel, not to say startling, sight met his gaze.

There stood Frank Hall in an open space, in boxing attitude, in front of a monster baboon.

The animal was endeavoring to imitate the motions of the crazed youth, and both stood glaring at each other like two pugilists waiting for time to be called.

CHAPTER XIII.

JACK IS CAPTURED.

In silence Jack followed the form of Robert Heathcoate, until they had arrived at an open spot in the forest.

"Now, my boy," said Heathcoate, suddenly turning around, "I am going to surprise the pirates—I am going to enter their village in broad daylight, and before I leave it some of them will be gone on a trip to that 'bourne from which no traveler ever returns.'"

Our hero nodded his head, thinking it best to favor everything his leader said.

"Yes," continued Heathcoate, "unlike the usual mode of an enemy approaching a camp, I am going in broad daylight, and I am going to succeed in my purpose, too."

"I hope you do, sir," said Jack.

"I am sure I will."

"Yes, sir."

"And I am going to kill some of the pirates before I come back. You see this package I have here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that contains half a dozen bombs. If one of them should explode within ten feet of a person, that person's chances of living are very slim."

"I've not the least doubt of it," remarked our hero.

"I'll prove it to you before we get back," said Heathcoate.

"Now, come on, and let us proceed with the utmost caution."

Jack obeyed, carrying his rifle in readiness for instant use.

When they arrived in close proximity to the freebooters' village, Heathcoate came to a halt.

"See that large bamboo hut in the center of the village?" asked he.

"Yes," replied Jack.

"Well, that is where the king, as he calls himself, lives. I am going to crawl up behind it and look in the window and see what is going on. If you should happen to hear one of these bombs explode while I am gone, you can make up your mind that one or more of the villains have gone to the next world in a rather sudden manner."

Jack could not help shuddering. Heathcoate talked of killing the Malays with as much ease as if he was going rabbit-hunting.

Our hero began to feel a sort of dread of the man. His man-

ner was too blood-thirsty to suit the boy. He almost wished he had not accompanied him; and, besides, he was growing decidedly hungry.

But he made up his mind to stick it out, now, and see how the exploit would terminate.

Presently they arrived at the edge of the thick forest.

Before them was the village, which lay in a sort of valley, and was effectually hidden on all sides from any passing ships.

It was an admirable place for the gang that infested it to hold forth.

Heathcoate came to a halt beneath the shadow of a huge tree, and Jack could see that his eyes were blazing with fury.

He began muttering to himself.

Suddenly he turned and addressed Jack.

"You stay here till I come back," he said. "I guess I can do better alone."

The next instant he fell flat upon his stomach and began slowly crawling toward Juan Dacresa's hut.

Jack watched him in silence. The sun was very hot, and hardly a single native of the village was to be seen.

Nearer crept Heathcoate, until at last he was lost to view in a rank growth of weeds.

Jack Darling seated himself upon the ground, his back against a tree, with his rifle across his knees.

The air was hot and oppressive, and the leafy foliage remained in a sort of listless apathy.

Jack began to feel drowsy.

Suddenly he was awakened to his senses by hearing a loud report.

He sprang to his feet.

That Heathcoate had exploded one of the bombs he felt certain.

He glanced in the direction of the pirate king's hut.

Smoke was issuing from the doorway and open windows, and a crowd of Malays were hastily gathering about.

Jack strained his eyes to see if he could catch a glimpse of Heathcoate, for he must certainly be somewhere in the near vicinity.

But there was not the least sign of him.

"I guess I will get a little nearer," thought Jack, and he began softly making his way toward a small bunch of bushes between the edge of the forest and the village.

He had hardly advanced ten feet when he heard a violent crashing in the undergrowth behind him.

Jack cocked his rifle and lay perfectly still.

The next instant half a dozen Malays burst from the cover of the woods directly upon him.

They observed him at once.

Uttering their loud war-cry, they made a dash for him.

But Jack was not to be taken so easily.

Springing to his feet, he drew his rifle to his shoulder and pulled the trigger.

Crack!

One of the savages tumbled headlong to the ground.

Crack! crack!

Two more bit the dust.

This disposed of half of them, but the remainder did not take to their heels, as Jack had thought they would. Juan Dacresa had taught them to fight to the last.

Before Jack could again press the trigger of his weapon a heavy club in the hands of one of the Malays felled him senseless to the ground.

Then, in less time than it takes to write it, he was bound hand and foot and being rapidly conveyed toward the pirates' village, where all was in confusion about the king's abode.

The blow Jack had received had been a glancing one, and by the time the three Malays had deposited him upon the ground his full consciousness had returned.

Raising his head, he glanced about him.

Juan Dacresa, the king of the freebooters, and Ganzees, the mutineer, stood a few feet from him in front of the hut, and coming out of the doorway were three or four of the Malays, carrying the body of a white man with them.

A single glance showed our hero that it was one of the sailors of the *Larkspur*.

That the man was dead was plainly evident, as one-half of his face was completely blown off and one of his arms was missing.

Before the body was placed upon the ground another was brought out, more horribly mutilated than the first one.

Then the rest of the mutineers came out, all more or less injured.

Jack shuddered at the fearful effects of Heathcoate's deadly bomb.

But where was he? That was the question.

Juan Dacresa appeared to be in a terrible rage, and Ganzees was as white as a sheet.

As soon as the king's eyes fell upon Jack he gave a start, and exclaimed:

"Ha! there is the one who threw the bomb. He shall suffer for it tenfold."

Then he gave a hasty order in the Malay tongue.

The next instant Jack was seized and stripped to the waist.

A fire was then immediately kindled of some resinous wood, which burned up brightly, emitting forth an intense heat.

Jack's face paled.

Before he had time to hardly form a conjecture of what was going to be done with him, a rope attached to a pulley on the top of a high post was fastened to his feet, and the next moment he was jerked upward with a force that nearly took the breath from his body.

Juan Dacresa smiled sardonically, while Ganzees nodded his head in approval.

"Now, boy," said the pirate king, in an icy tone of voice, "I am going to let you hang, head downward, over that fire until you are completely roasted! A pleasant death, is it not?"

But Jack scarcely heard the words. The fire burned his head and shoulders so badly that he thought of naught else.

Of all the agony he ever dreamed of, this was the worst, and he began twisting about like an eel in his endeavor to escape the fierce heat.

He gave himself up as lost.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DARING RESCUE.

Jack Darling groaned in anguish as he felt the flames licking his quivering flesh.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Juan Dacresa, "does it hurt you? That's nothing, my boy, to what you'll get later on! Ah—that's it! cry out; let us hear how loud you can scream!"

Poor Jack! He had uttered a shriek in spite of himself.

In vain did he endeavor to draw himself up out of the reach of the fierce flames. The heat was unbearable, and the agony he suffered indescribable.

Everything he had gone through in his past life flashed like a panorama through Jack's mind; but the one thing that seemed to stay there above all others was the thought of his widowed mother, who, no doubt, was now sitting in the doorway of the neat little cottage waiting to hear some tidings of her boy, who had gone out sailing for a day's pleasure and never returned.

Jack groaned in anguish.

The pirate king and the mutineers laughed boisterously. To them the scene was doubly pleasing, since they believed Jack to be the one who had thrown the bomb into the window of the hut.

They had not stopped to ask Jack's captors where they had caught him, but took it for granted that it was he who had done the deed.

Some of the Malays proceeded to throw on more wood.

Snap—crackle! the flames flared up brightly, sending forth more heat.

Jack could stand it no longer.

A wild shriek of mortal agony left his lips, and then—

The fire was scattered in a thousand different directions; a knife flashed before his eyes, and the next moment he was whisked through the air and set upon his feet a dozen feet away from the spot.

"Follow me, and run!" exclaimed a voice in his ear, which he was too dazed to recognize.

He had sense enough, however, to do as he was bid, and he struck out manfully, putting all the strength he could command into the effort.

The next instant two loud explosions rang out in rapid succession. Jack knew now that he was following Robert Heathcoate.

The bursting of the bombs created such a havoc that no movement was made to give pursuit to the two fleeing forms until they were well into the labyrinths of the forest.

Then such a howl arose from the entire assemblage that it sounded as if a thousand lions had been let loose all at one time.

"Run!" shouted Heathcoate, who was fleeing with a lightning speed, and leading Jack easily.

The terrible effects of the barbaric torture the boy had gone through had dazed and unnerved him to such an extent that he hardly knew what he was doing; but he obeyed the command mechanically, and put on a fresh burst of speed.

Presently they heard the sounds of pursuit; a hundred yelling demons were upon their track, sweeping down upon them in a vast semi-circle.

Jack's full strength and faculties gradually returned to him, and soon he had gained upon Heathcoate, and was running at his side.

Heathcoate spoke never a word, but with lips firmly set he kept on in the direction of the ruins, breathing heavily from the strain he was undergoing.

Presently they struck a clear space. The old cathedral was just in front of them.

At that moment the pursuing Malays burst into view. They were faster runners than the two fugitives, and had gained rapidly upon them.

Suddenly Jack stumbled and fell; Heathcoate kept on in his flight, not being aware of the mishap for a moment.

When he turned he had arrived at the side of the building, and Jack was struggling to his feet, a dozen yards behind him.

Before our hero could make a spurt to reach Heathcoate's side, the Malays were upon him.

Just as his pursuers seized him in their grasp, Jack saw his companion disappear in the very side of the old ruins, while the words: "I'll rescue you, never fear!" came floating to his ears.

Then the boy was jerked to his feet, a brutal savage on either side of him.

But they did not offer to hurt him in the least; they evidently had something better in store for him when they got him back to the presence of Juan Dacresa.

Poor Jack! After so nearly making his escape, it was hard to be led back again.

If he had not made the misstep he would have been safely inside of the old stone building by this time.

He made up his mind not to venture out in Heathcoate's company in open daylight again if he succeeded in getting out of this scrape all right.

Heathcoate had said he would rescue him; Jack made up his mind he would have to do it very shortly or it would be too late.

But somehow he had faith in what the man had said, and as he walked along in the midst of his swarthy captors, his spirits were not so low as they would otherwise have been.

His neck and shoulders were covered with blisters, from his recent terrible experience with the fire, and they burned him severely.

As the party made their way back through the forest, the boy kept his eyes open in search of an avenue of escape.

Presently an unexpected opportunity came.

A frolicsome troop of monkeys on a high bank to the left commenced a noisy chattering, and began hurling small stones and other missiles at the party.

This proceeding aroused the ire of the Malays, and they halted and endeavored to chastise the mischievous little creatures.

Jack laughed, in spite of his situation, at the queer pranks the monkeys cut up.

One old fellow, somewhat larger than the rest, hurled a chunk of soft clay at one of the men who had our hero by the arm.

It struck him fairly between the eyes, completely blinding him for a moment, and causing him to let go his hold upon Jack.

Then, exerting all his strength in one mighty effort, Jack made a sudden spring and freed himself from the other Malay who held fast of him, and dashed into the thick undergrowth.

The attention of the dusky crowd was so much engrossed with the monkeys, that for a moment they stood spellbound and gazed at Jack's retreating form.

Then, uttering a wild yell, they left the monkeys and started in pursuit.

The course Jack had taken in his dash for liberty lay in an opposite direction to the old ruins.

It was a matter of life and death with him now, and, gathering his muscles, he ran like a frightened deer.

On—he kept at the same speed, his pursuers gaining upon him slowly but surely.

Presently he arrived at the edge of the forest.

He gave a start of surprise.

Before him was the open sea, and lying nearly in front of him upon the treacherous reef was the hull of the wrecked *Larkspur*. Jack ran to the very water's edge.

What should he do now? If he turned back he would surely be recaptured, for his pursuers had spread out fan-shaped and were nearing him every moment.

A sudden thought struck him. He would take to the water and swim to the wrecked ship.

That the Malays would swim after him he felt almost certain, but he concluded to risk it at any rate. He might find weapons to defend himself aboard the wreck, and it was the only course he could pursue now.

These thoughts flashed through his mind like a shot, and he had no sooner come to the conclusion than he plunged through the breakers and began his desperate swim for life.

A few powerful strokes and he was outside the line of breakers.

His savage pursuers came to a halt on the shore, and made all sorts of threatening gestures for him to come back.

But Jack heeded them not, but kept on straight for the *Larkspur*.

Observing this, one of the Malays drew his gun to his shoulder and pulled the trigger.

Bang!

Jack threw up his arms and disappeared beneath the waves.

CHAPTER XV.

FRANK HALL DISAPPEARS AND LARRY IS CAPTURED.

Larry O'Dowd stared at the scene in blank amazement.

The position that Frank Hall and the baboon stood in was too ludicrous for anything, and he could not refrain from laughing.

The animal seemed to be in a playful mood, and it imitated every move the strangely demented youth made to the best of its ability.

Larry watched them with interest, holding his rifle in readiness to shoot the baboon the instant it made a move to injure Frank.

Frank nodded his head from side to side, and went through all the sparring maneuvers he was acquainted with, and the baboon did the same.

Suddenly the boy shot out his right fist with a terrible force, the blow catching the animal full on its snout.

Spat!

Down to the ground flat on its back went the baboon, and the crazed youth began to dance about in a gleeful manner, at the same time shouting:

"Come on, old fellow; I can whip anything in the whole school, from the principal down, and don't you forget it!"

His queer adversary did not forget it, either, for, uttering a fierce, angry snarl, it sprang to its feet and made a rush for Frank.

The tall youth did not retreat an inch, but stood in genuine boxing attitude, ready for the rush.

Poor fellow! He evidently had the idea that he was indulging in a fight with some school-fellow.

"Come on!" he shouted; "I'll black your eye this time!"

The baboon did come on, and it is hard to tell what might have happened if Larry had not pulled the trigger of his rifle at that moment.

Crack! The report rang out with startling distinctness.

The enraged animal staggered back a few paces and then fell in a heap to the ground, a bullet in its heart.

Then the manner of the demented boy suddenly changed.

"My God!" he exclaimed, in a terror-stricken tone, "I have killed him, and I will be hanged! But they shan't catch me; no—I'll hide the body down a well. Oh! oh! oh! Why did I do it?"

Then casting a cunning, idiotic glance about him, and perfectly ignoring the presence of Larry, who now stood within a few feet of him, he lifted the dead carcass of the baboon in his arms and started to make his way into the bushes.

"Hold on, Frank!"

It was Larry O'Dowd who spoke, and his hand clutched the boy by the shoulder.

"Ha!" shrieked Frank, quickly turning about. "Don't touch me! They shall never hang me—I'll kill you first!"

And before Larry knew what had happened the demented boy.

with the strength of a young lion, threw the dead baboon upon him with such a sudden force that it felled him to the ground, nearly knocking the breath from him.

Then, uttering a maniacal shriek, Frank darted away in the depths of the forest with lightning speed.

Larry arose to his feet as soon as he was able to do so, but the crazy boy was gone, nor could he hear any noise in the undergrowth to designate which way he went.

"Well, that beats anything I ever experienced!" ejaculated the boy when he had found the use of his tongue.

He searched about the vicinity for fully an hour, but he could not find the least trace of Frank.

At last it occurred to him that he had better return to his companions and all hands start out to look for him.

Accordingly, he started to retrace his steps.

He had hardly proceeded ten paces when a Malay savage confronted him with a gun pointed at his breast.

Larry stopped still in his tracks.

The Malay had the drop on him, as the saying goes, and he knew not what to do.

Before he had time to consider, a dozen more of the Malay's companions appeared upon the scene.

The boy now gave himself up as lost.

He stood as if petrified and allowed the savages to seize him and make a prisoner of him.

The Malays then proceeded on the way to their village, where they arrived in the course of twenty minutes.

As Larry walked into the place he saw that all was excitement there; scattered about a big fire were a dozen dead and mangled bodies.

They were the fruits of Robert Heathcoate's deadly bombs.

Larry, of course, knew nothing of what had happened, and he gazed in surprise at his surroundings.

A knot of white men stood near at hand.

Larry at once recognized them to be the pirate king and the mutineers.

On seeing the boy Ganzees gave a start.

"There is one of the lubbers!" he exclaimed. "Now is the time to make him explain the manner in which he left the hut."

"You are right," said Juan Dacresa, facing Larry. "Now, boy, I want you to tell me how you escaped from the hut you were confined in last night."

"Supposing I refuse," retorted Larry, now having regained his full composure.

"Refuse, and you die!"

"I'll die, then."

"What! do you mean to say that you will not tell?"

"I do."

"Have a care, boy. Remember, I am a desperate man, and several things have happened here in the last half hour that put me in anything but a trifling mood."

Larry made no reply.

"Come," said Ganzees, putting his par in; "tell all about it, or it'll be the worse for you."

The boy curled his lip scornfully, and gave him a look of contempt.

The mutineer's face turned black as a thunder cloud.

"Make him tell," he hissed, turning to Juan Dacresa.

"Make him tell—how?" asked the pirate king.

"Torture him until he is compelled to."

"We just tried torture on that other boy—you saw how that turned out."

"Yes; but because he made his escape and his rescuer threw a couple of bombs among us, is no reason that anything like that will happen in this case. Why, by this time, if your followers have not captured them, they are safely hidden somewhere in the ruins of the old cathedral."

"I am sure they are not there," returned Juan Dacresa, musingly; "the place has been searched from top to bottom, and there is no possible place for any one to hide."

"Don't you think you had better torture this boy and make him tell how he and his companions got out of the hut?" asked Ganzees, after a moment's silence.

"Yes; I will leave it all in your hands. Proceed, while I watch for the approach of an invisible enemy."

"Why invisible? I am sure we saw the one who threw the bombs and did all the damage."

"Yes, when it was too late to catch him."

"You don't know but that he has been caught by this time."

"Well, never mind; I place this matter of torturing the boy in your hands. Now let me see how you will do it."

"I'll do it good enough, never fear," retorted the leader of the mutineers. "Jim Hardcastle, you just find me a good, stiff bird's feather."

The villain addressed started to do as he was bid, and presently returned with the desired article.

The pirate king looked on curiously.

"Probably I am not taking as much trouble as you would if you were doing it," said Ganzees, in explanation; "but it will answer just the same."

"What are you going to do with that feather?"

"I'll show you directly."

Larry O'Dowd was now thrown upon his back, and Jim Hardcastle proceeded to remove his shoes and stockings.

When this was accomplished, Ganzees began tickling the soles of the captive boy's feet.

Larry began to twist himself about convulsively.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Juan Dacresa; "your idea of torture is a good one."

"I guess it is," returned the mutineer. "See him! the sweat is beginning to break out upon his forehead."

At length Larry gave a groan of agony. The tickling sensation upon the soles of his naked feet was more than he could stand.

"Are you going to tell?" asked Ganzees, as he ceased in his cruel work for a moment.

"No!" almost screamed Larry. "Kill me if you like, but I will never tell!"

"You won't, eh?" and again the feather began to get in its work.

Suddenly the boy gave a hysterical shriek, and fainted dead away.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE AVENGER TO THE RESCUE.

As Jack Darling sank beneath the waves the Malays on the shore uttered a gleeful shout, and began to dance about upon the sand.

But it was quickly turned to one of dismay and anger, for in a moment the boy arose to the surface and began striking out for the wreck with renewed speed.

The bullet from the gun had grazed the side of his head, just above the ear, in its course, severing a lock of his hair, but otherwise doing no damage.

"Come on, you villains!" hissed Jack, between his clinched teeth; "I'll lead you a good chase before you catch me, at any rate."

The sea was almost as calm as a dish, and our hero cleft the water like a veritable fish.

The water, too, was cooling to the burns he had received, and it put new life in him.

Seeing that the fugitive was escaping them, several of the Malays dashed into the surf and began swimming after him.

But good swimmers as they were, they could not gain upon Jack any, and presently he arrived at the side of the wreck.

His pursuers were now a good three hundred yards away from him, and he thought if he could only get hold of a rifle or revolver he would be able to make a good stand against them.

It was but the work of a moment for him to seize upon the vessel's fore-chains and clamber aboard.

Almost the first thing his eyes lighted upon, when he reached the deck, was a revolver lying in the scuppers of the ship, where it had evidently been dropped by one of the mutineers, and left unnoticed.

Jack seized the weapon, and quickly saw that all its chambers were loaded.

"Now, then," thought he, "I stand a little show."

Nearer approached the swimmers, the boy screening himself behind the bulwarks and watching them through a crack.

At length the foremost savage arrived at the *Larkspur's* bow, and started to climb up her chains.

Crack!

It was Jack's revolver that spoke.

The dusky pirate uttered a cry and dropped back in the sea again.

But this did not stay the others, for presently two more began to clamber aboard.

Crack! crack!

It was at such short range that Jack could not fail to hit them, and they, too, toppled overboard.

The boy's spirits began to rise.

Possibly his enemies might become disconcerted, and give up the idea of capturing him, and return to the shore.

But not so. They began swimming about at a safe distance from his revolver for a minute or so, and then about a dozen of them began striking out for the vessel's bow in a straight line.

They were going to try what a simultaneous rush would do.

Jack's heart began to sink. He knew that some of them would surely be successful in getting aboard, and then it would be all up with him.

He made up his mind to fight to the last, however, and prepared himself for the struggle.

With a coolness that seemed almost improbable he emptied the remaining chambers of his revolver, and then, seizing a belaying pin, he began hitting the dusky boarders on the fingers at every opportunity.

But this could not last long.

At length one of the Malays succeeded in reaching the deck, and at once grappled with Jack.

Thud! The belaying pin in the boy's hands struck the rascal full upon the skull, sending him in a heap to the deck.

By this time a couple more of the Malays had cleared the bulwarks, and with uplifted knives they rushed at the brave boy who was making such a noble stand.

At that instant several rifle shots rang out in rapid succession, and both of Jack's foes dropped to the deck.

Our hero was astounded at this turn of events, and for a moment he could not move.

Some one had surely come to his rescue, but who could it be?—that was the question.

Turning his eyes in the direction the sounds of the rifle shots had come from, he beheld a long, low-looking craft, upon the deck of which were three men.

Jack easily recognized two of them as Captain Jobes and Bill Bunt, but the other was a stranger to him.

He quickly came to the conclusion that this must be Robert Heathcoate's vessel; but, whether it was or not, it had arrived just in time to save him from being captured or killed outright.

He gave a rousing cheer, which was immediately answered by those on board the *Avenger*, for it was, indeed, Heathcoate's boat.

As soon as the Malays in the water observed the approach of the strange craft, they uttered a cry of alarm, and started to swim for the shore with all possible speed.

In a minute or so the *Avenger* drew up alongside the wreck, and Jack was soon on board.

"How did you happen to come along in just the right moment?" asked he, as he shook Captain Jobes by the hand.

"We saw you from the beach, but didn't know who you were. The Malays were after you, though, and that was enough; so we boarded the *Avenger* at once and started to the rescue."

When Jack heard of what had happened to Frank Hall, and how Larry O'Dowd had set out to overtake him and had not returned, his surprise knew no bounds.

The party was small now, since Heathcoate was not with them, either.

Carrie now came upon the deck, and our hero proceeded to relate what had befallen him since he had set out with her uncle.

All hands listened with amazement at the extraordinary brutality of the freebooters, and the wonderful daring of Heathcoate.

"Well," said Carrie, after a pause, "we had better put back and make our way to our headquarters, where my uncle is now, in all probability, waiting. We can then form some plan to start at once in search of the two who are missing."

Bill Bunt nodded his head in approval at this.

"Ther gal are right," said he. "She oughter bin a general, or somethin' like that—she air got sich a long head on her."

The beautiful girl smiled at what was intended as a compliment to her; and, descending the small companionway, gave the order to the engineer to put back for their starting point.

As the *Avenger's* prow was turned about, Jack saw the last of the Malays disappear into the edge of the forest.

"By rights we should have given chase to them and killed every one of them," he thought; "for they richly deserve it."

Then he turned his attention to the craft he was upon.

The strange vessel was about seventy feet long and twenty feet wide in her broadest part, and sat very low in the water.

Her deck was not more than eighteen inches above her water-line, and was perfectly flat, with not the least vestige of a rail surrounding it.

The pilot-house, which seemed to be composed almost entirely of the heaviest of plate glass, extended about three feet about the deck.

Abaft of this was a small smoke-stack, from which a puffing sound came, similar to that of a tug under low pressure, though scarcely any smoke could be seen issuing from it.

The whole hull was encased in plates of iron, making her capable of resisting bullets, or even heavier shot, at any range.

Jack saw that her shape was as graceful as any sailing yacht he had ever seen, and he could not help but admire the craft.

But if he was pleased with her outside appearance, he was doubly so when he went below.

Her cabin was furnished in the most luxurious style imaginable.

He stood gazing at his surroundings in a half-awed surprise, when Carrie Heathcoate, who was in the pilot-house in charge of the wheel, beckoned him to her side.

"Look!" she exclaimed, pointing to the shore, "is not that my uncle?"

"Yes," replied Jack; "and, by Jove! he acts strangely. What's up, I wonder?"

The next moment they saw a dozen Malays and two or three whites come rushing down upon Heathcoate from the edge of the woods.

Raising his Winchester repeater to his shoulder, the Englishman began pouring out a veritable hailstorm of bullets into the ranks of his advancing foes.

This checked them for a moment, and Heathcoate took to his heels along a strip of sand, reloading his rifle as he ran.

The shots he had fired had killed and wounded half a dozen of his enemies, and they began following him more cautiously, dodging behind the trees at the edge of the forest.

Occasionally a bullet would whistle past the daring Englishman's head. But he kept on in his flight, keeping his eye upon the rapidly approaching *Avenger*.

Presently the strange craft landed upon the beach a few hundred yards from Heathcoate.

He at once started to run to her. But before he had made a third of the distance, Ganzees and his crowd rushed out of the woods and intercepted him, shooting their guns wildly as they did so.

Heathcoate's blood was up, and his eyes flashed fire.

He made up his mind that he would reach the *Avenger* or die in the attempt.

At that moment a cry was heard, and Captain Jobes, Jack, Bill Bunt and the engineer sprang from the deck of the vessel and dashed upon the beach, rifles in hand.

Ganzees and his party were now between Heathcoate and the arrivals, and they were not slow to recognize the fact that they were "between two fires," as the saying goes.

Crack! crack! crack!

The rifles in the hands of Jack Darling and his companions began to speak, and two or three Malays fell, to rise no more.

"To the woods!" shouted Ganzees, leading the way; "but don't let the lubber we've been chasing reach his friends!"

Crack!

A mutineer at the villain's side dropped dead in his tracks as he ceased speaking.

The next minute the freebooters had entered the edge of the forest and stood at bay behind a group of mammoth tree trunks.

Jack's party now came to a halt behind a cluster of rocks, within easy range of the mutineers, and both watched for a chance to get a shot.

In order for Heathcoate to join his friends he had to pass in close proximity to the freebooters, so he stood still, out of range of their weapons, undecided what to do.

Five minutes passed. Not a move had been made by either party as yet, and it was growing rather monotonous.

Suddenly Ganzees and one of the mutineers slipped away under the cover of the thick bushes after speaking a few hurried words to the rest of the crowd.

The five minutes of silence merged into a quarter of an hour.

Jack's party began to grow impatient.

There stood Heathcoate, upon the strip of beach a few rods away, gun in hand, as immovable as a statue.

For him to get to his friends, or they to him, would incur a risk of some one being killed.

Jack was just about to give the word to charge upon the freebooters and endeavor to scatter them, when the shrill scream of a female rang out upon the air.

All hands started as if they were shot, and turned their gaze in the direction of the *Avenger*.

A startling, not to say discouraging, sight met their eyes.

They saw Ganzees and one of his villainous followers upon the deck of the craft with Carrie Heathcoate a prisoner.

Even while they looked upon the scene in blank dismay their foes made a charge from the woods upon them.

It was fight now or death.

They chose the former, and at length succeeded in repulsing the freebooters with a loss of three or four of their number.

In the excitement of the retreat, Heathcoate managed to steal up and join the party.

As soon as the freebooters fell back to the woods again our friends made a rush for the *Avenger*.

Too late!

Before they were halfway to her they saw her back slowly away from the beach and then turn around and go skimming over the waves.

Ganzees was at the wheel, and a devilish smile of triumph lit up his countenance, while he waved his hand in a mock farewell to the party on the beach.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MISSING PRISONER.

Ganzees noted the look of dismay upon the faces of Jack Darling and his companions as they gazed at the *Avenger* as she forged swiftly away from them.

"This craft's a lucky find for me," he muttered, as he deftly turned her wheel, sending her prow in the direction of the freebooters' village, at the other side of the island.

He calculated that this event would make him doubly solid with Juan Dacresa.

Carrie Heathcoate had been locked securely in the cabin of the vessel, and when the girl came to from her fainting spell it was some minutes before she could realize what had happened.

But when she did so how bitterly she repented not allowing her dog to come aboard the *Avenger* with her.

Had the faithful animal been in her company Ganzees and Jim Hardcastle would never have stolen upon her in the manner they did.

The sagacious bloodhound would have certainly apprised her of their coming, and then she would have been prepared for them.

As these thoughts rushed through the girl's mind she began to more plainly realize how fully she was in the power of her uncle's enemies.

Presently her reflections were cut short by the sound of the throbbing wheel of the *Avenger* ceasing.

Carrie judged that the two mutineers had brought her in a harbor somewhere.

She was right. Ganzees had followed a small stream up until he was now within a few hundred yards of the outskirts of the village.

He brought the *Avenger* to a standstill in the midst of a lot of proas, and then proceeded to make her fast.

A number of Malays were standing about, and they gazed in dumfounded amazement at this strange-looking craft.

Leaving Jim Hardcastle in charge, Ganzees led Carrie Heathcoate ashore, in spite of her protestations.

Straight to Juan Dacresa's hut went the villain, a crowd of the natives following at his heels.

The natives began to regard him as a man of some note.

Ganzees knew it, and he felt proud over his recent achievement. Presently he arrived in front of the king of the freebooters' abode.

Hearing the confusion outside, Juan Dacresa came to the door. He gave a start of surprise at seeing Ganzees and his fair prisoner.

"What have we here?" he asked.

"This is one of the party that has been seen at different times, but always disappeared before she could be caught," replied Ganzees.

"How did you manage to capture her?"

"I not only captured her, but a steam vessel as well, which will be of the most important use to you."

"A what?" asked the pirate.

"A steam vessel—a craft that runs by steam," repeated the mutineer.

"Where is it?"

Juan Dacresa had an incredulous look upon his face as he asked the question.

"She lies in the stream, over there, among your boats."

"I must see this vessel at once."

"Hadn't you better do something with this prize I have got?" asked Ganzees, referring to Carrie.

"Yes; I'll lock her up in my library—she'll be as safe there as if she were in a prison cell, and, besides, everything is comfortable there. I suppose you brought her to me as a sort of present—did you not?"

"No!" returned the villainous mutineer, almost savagely.

"Come on; let us go and take a look at the boat, and talk about the girl afterward. How is the boy prisoner making out?"

Juan Dacresa made no reply, and after seeing that Carrie was locked safely in the quarters assigned to her, followed Ganzees in the direction of the stream where the *Avenger* lay moored.

The mutineer's manner of replying to his question nettled him somewhat.

There was trouble brewing between the two, and Carrie was the cause of it.

Neither spoke a word further regarding the girl, and soon the pirate king was lost in his admiration of the *Avenger*.

"You shall be captain of this craft," said he, when he had thoroughly inspected her. "She will make an admirable addition to my fleet of proas. By the way—we have not captured a ship since you have been with us, have we?"

"No," retorted Ganzees. "Isn't it about time something was done in that line?"

"You can't work unless you have a job," said Juan Dacresa, coldly.

"Oh! waiting for a ship, eh?"

"That's it, exactly."

"How is it that you have never been wiped out by a man-o'-war, or something?"

"Because my rule is that when we take a ship, not one of her crew is left to tell the tale. Consequently, as our hiding place is a good one, we live in comparative ease and comfort."

"Well, let's go and bring the boy prisoner out, and see what we can do with him," said Ganzees, changing the subject. "Maybe we can force him to lead us to the hiding place of our secret enemies."

"A good idea," replied Juan Dacresa. "We will put it in execution at once."

Arriving back at his hut, the pirate king at once sent a couple of the Malays to bring Larry O'Dowd to him, while he proceeded to unlock the door of the room in which Carrie Heathcoate was confined.

"Where are you going?" demanded Ganzees.

"To bring the girl out and see if she and the boy are acquainted," was the reply.

"Oh!"

"Why did you ask?"

"See here, Dacresa," suddenly said Ganzees, laying his hand half imploringly upon the freebooter's shoulder, "I want you to do one thing for me."

"What is it?" asked Dacresa, curiously.

"I want you to promise me that you will leave the girl I captured to me."

"Why so?"

"Because I am a little bit smitten with her pretty face, and I want her for a wife."

The pirate king laughed loudly.

"Oh, ho! you do, eh? Suppose I were to say the same thing?"

"But I should have the first say in this matter."

"You should, eh? Remember that I am king here, and that all have to obey me."

"I know that," returned Ganzees, biting his lips with suppressed rage; "but remember, I have been a big help to you since I have belonged to your band."

"Yes; and you must remember that I have but to say the word, and you and your companions will be beheaded before you are ten minutes older!"

"Then you won't grant my request?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I have determined to make the girl my own wife."

Ganzees' countenance turned a sickly green.

"As you say," said he, "you are boss here, and no one recognizes the fact better than I."

"All right, then. Drop the subject, and we will call it quits."

"Very well; bring out the girl and see if she knows the boy; I am satisfied already that they are all in league together, though."

"We will see."

With these words, the cool villain unlocked the door and entered the room.

Carrie was reclining on a richly upholstered divan, weeping bitterly at her misfortune.

She arose to her feet as the pirate king entered.

"Come, miss," said he, in a polite manner, "you are wanted outside for a moment."

The girl followed him at once. She thought it useless to act stubbornly in the matter.

Juan Dacresa led the way to the outside of the house, Ganzees, who had been in waiting at the door, bringing up the rear.

The Malays who had been sent after the prisoner were in waiting, but Larry was not with them.

"Where is the boy?" demanded the pirate, half angrily.

"Him gone," replied one of the dusky villains, plucking up enough courage to answer the question.

"What!" exclaimed Juan Dacresa and Ganzees in a breath. "What?"

"Yes; him nowhere in the hut."

The two villains were knocked speechless.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LARRY O'DOWD'S PERIL.

It was several seconds before any one in Jack Darling's party could utter a word.

They were too much astounded to speak.

Ganzees had turned the tables on them with a vengeance.

Robert Heathcoate began pacing up and down the beach in a nervous, excitable manner.

The loss of the *Avenger* seemed to have turned his brain for the time being.

At length he stopped, and waving his hands above his head, exclaimed:

"If we do not immediately recapture my boat and rescue my niece everything is lost!"

"We'll do both, never fear," replied Jack, who had now come back to his senses.

"Ay, that we will," put in Ben Bunt.

"We must!" almost shrieked Heathcoate, a dangerous light shining in his eyes.

"Let us return to headquarters and endeavor to form some plan to proceed with," suggested our hero.

"That's it, boy! that's it!" exclaimed Heathcoate, brightening up. "But where are our accursed enemies who attacked us a few minutes ago? I don't see them."

Not a sign of the Malays or mutineers was to be seen.

They had either stolen away to their village in the excitement, or else they were up to some new devilry.

Rifles in hand, our party made their way to the clump of trees where their enemies had so recently been.

Search about as they might they could find no traces of them.

"Well," said Heathcoate, "they are gone, so we had better go, too. We will make our way to the old ruins by way of the tunnel. Come."

In an exceedingly short space of time they had arrived at the mouth of the passage, and after looking carefully about to make sure that they were not observed by anybody, all hands entered.

In a little while they were safely in the old cathedral.

A consultation was at once held.

At length it was decided to wait until darkness had set in, and then make their way through the tunnel which led to the hut in the pirates' village and then see what they could accomplish.

"I will take a good supply of bombs with me, and, if needs be, will blow the entire village into kingdom come!" said Heathcoate.

It was near sunset now, and the party had not long to wait to make the attempt to carry out their project.

Heathcoate was very impatient, and kept pacing the floor, all the while muttering strangely to himself.

An hour dragged slowly by.

Suddenly the eccentric Englishman spoke.

"I have changed my mind," said he. "I will go alone to Dacresa's village; the rest of you can go by the underground passage. I feel sure that I can accomplish more alone. A storm is coming up by the sound of the wind outside, and that will greatly add to our purpose."

"You are right about the storm," spoke up Captain Jobes. "It is going to blow great guns pretty soon, and the rain will come down in bucketfuls."

Heathcoate made no reply, but began attiring himself in a complete suit of rubber from head to feet.

Then seizing his rifle and what appeared to be a good-sized valise, he waved a silent adieu with his hand, and left the room.

When he had gone Jack said:

"Come. Let us go by the passage and see what is going on in the village. If the hut it leads to is unoccupied we will be all right."

All hands at once signified their willingness, and presently they had descended to the cellar of the old ruins, and had entered the tunnel-like passage.

* * * * *

We must now return to Larry, whom we left unconscious from the cruel torture he had received at the hands of Ganzees.

The boy was strong and hardy by nature, and it was not long before he returned to his senses.

He opened his eyes and lay still for a few moments, gradually taking in his surroundings.

In less than two minutes he came to the conclusion that he had been thrown in the very same hut that he and his companions had been imprisoned in when they had been captured aboard the wreck of the *Larkspur*.

His hopes flew up to the top notch, and he immediately arose to his feet.

An examination showed him that he was correct in his supposition. There were the outlines of the slab in the floor of the hut, which covered the opening leading to the underground passage, through which he had made his escape before.

"Strange," muttered Larry, "that the pirates never discovered this. They must be dumb, indeed. But then I don't suppose Juan Dacresa ever examined this hut very carefully; and, anyhow, it would take a very close observer to detect the slab. Well, they think they have got the best of me, but I'll outwit them, after all. When they come after me to give me a second dose of 'feather-tickling,' I'll be gone."

The boy chuckled half audibly, and after making sure that none of the Malays were coming into the hut, he lifted the slab of stone, after a slight difficulty.

The next moment he had dropped down the opening into the passage and closed the hole, going through the same proceeding that he had done once before.

Then, lighting a match, he was soon making his way hastily along the passage.

He could proceed with more ease this time, for the simple reason that he knew exactly where he was going.

At length he came to the iron door leading to the cellar of the stone building.

It was partly open, and he pushed his way through.

Crossing the damp, noisome place, he began rapidly mounting the stairway.

In another moment he was in the room above.

Lighting a match, he proceeded to take in his surroundings and find the other stairway.

At that moment a startling incident occurred.

There was a crashing of falling dirt and stones, and a body dropped from somewhere, landing almost at his very feet.

Larry recoiled a few steps, and hastily struck another match.

He gave a violent start of surprise.

Before him lay the body of Frank Hall in a confused heap upon the floor.

But only for a moment did the crazed boy lie thus. The next moment he sprang to his feet with a bound and faced Larry.

His eyes were shining with a fierce, maniacal light, and his clothing was hanging in tatters upon his form.

Frank Hall looked as though he had been "run through a threshing machine," as Larry afterward put it.

Drawing a knife from his belt, he raised it in a threatening attitude.

"What do you want?" he asked, in a strange, unnatural tone.

"Why, hello, Frank!" exclaimed Larry; "don't you know me, old fellow?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed poor, demented Frank. "Don't I know you? Well, I guess I do! You are one of the mutineers who tried to kill me—know you? I guess I do!"

"But, Frank," gasped Larry, surely you know—"

"Shut up!" screamed the crazed youth, "or I'll cut your throat!"

A shivery sensation passed down Larry O'Dowd's spine, and he wished himself back in the freebooters' hut again.

Suddenly a playful mood seemed to come over Frank.

He began dancing about Larry, flourishing his knife in dangerous proximity to the boy's face.

"Sing," he shouted, threateningly, "sing, while I dance!"

The door upstairs, leading from the stairway, must have been open, for the place was lighted by a dim, uncertain light, which made the scene more awesome to Larry.

"Come, are you going to sing?" demanded Frank, his eyes shooting forth a dangerous glitter.

Poor Larry! There was nothing left for him to do but to obey the crazy lad's command, so he at once commenced a rollicking Irish song, though he felt like anything else but singing at that moment.

Then Frank Hall began to dance all the steps that he ever knew, and a great many that he did not.

This sort of business was kept up for fully fifteen minutes, and then the demented boy ceased his antics and commanded Larry to stop singing.

"Now go downstairs!" he hissed, raising his knife threateningly to put more force to the command.

Larry obeyed. He saw that he would but endanger his life if he refused to humor Frank.

The crazy boy seized him by the shoulder as soon as they had arrived at the foot of the stairway, where all was in total darkness.

"I want you to take me to the place where you came from," said he; "and if you don't I'll kill you!"

Tremblingly, Larry groped his way until he had found the iron door.

Frank Hall pushed him through, and the two began making their way along the passage, the point of the crazy lad's knife pressed against Larry's throat.

At length, after what seemed an hour to Larry, they arrived at the end of the passage beneath the hut he had so lately come from.

Both came to a halt.

"We can't go any further," said Larry.

"Why not?" asked Frank.

"Because this is the end of the passage."

"Is this where you came from, then?"

"Yes."

"You lie?"

"But—"

"See here; there must be a door here somewhere. We will go out through it and have some fun. Now, you find the door right away, or I'll cut your throat from ear to ear!"

"All right," responded Larry, thinking it better to be in the clutches of the Malay freebooters than in the hands of a crazy person.

He was just about to raise the stone slab above his head when the sounds of approaching footsteps were heard coming along the passage.

CHAPTER XIX.

HEATHCOATE CAPTURES THE AVENGER.

We must now return to Robert Heathcoate, who started alone on his mission to capture the *Avenger* and effect the rescue of Carrie.

He was a man of nerve was Heathcoate, and venturing forth in the blinding storm and darkness to pay his deadly enemies a visit did not alarm him in the least.

As soon as he had passed through the secret door leading from

the apartments where our friends were, he drew a small dark lantern from his pocket and lighted it.

Then making his way to the room above that which led to the underground passage, he ascended a small rope ladder until his head came in contact with the ceiling.

Giving a gentle push upward, a huge flat stone turned over, disclosing an opening about three feet square, through which the rain dashed in upon him.

The next moment he was outside, and the stone, which worked upon a pivot, dropped back in its place.

Heathcoate now stood on the ground at the side of the ruined cathedral.

This was the identical spot that Jack Darling had fallen through when he had followed in pursuit of Carrie and her bloodhound the first night he had been upon the island.

He had stepped upon the slab of stone and his weight had overturned it, causing him to fall headlong through into the cellar-like apartment.

Heathcoate had become thoroughly acquainted with every inch of the island and the many secrets concerning it, which were entirely unknown to Juan Dacresa and his band.

The secret underground passages must have been built when the cathedral-like edifice had been constructed—ages before—for what purpose Heathcoate knew not, nor did he care, so long as they suited his ends.

The man had become desperate over the loss of his vessel, and he made up his mind to take her at all hazards.

He rightly judged that Ganzees had taken her up the stream which ran almost to the village, and toward this he now began making his way.

It was a wild night, and suited his purpose well.

As he progressed through the tangled mazes of the forest the storm seemed to increase in fury.

The lightning flashed with extraordinary brilliancy, while the thunder crashed in loud peals.

Ever and anon a mighty forest tree would fall crashing to the earth, a victim of the powerful electric fluid.

But Heathcoate heeded it not. He stalked silently along on his way, his lips tightly compressed, and his whole thoughts centered on the object he had in view.

Presently a flash of lightning revealed to him the fact that he had arrived at the stream.

He followed it up for a way, and the next flash showed him a number of proas, in the center of which lay the wonderful craft he had constructed.

Heathcoate's heart gave a jump.

Before him was the *Avenger*. Now the question was: How was he to get to her?

The boat was on the opposite side of the stream, which was about thirty yards wide at this point, and a number of Malays were seated upon the bank in the drenching rain, keeping guard over her.

It did not take Heathcoate long to form a plan, and he at once started up the side of the stream, until he found a place sufficiently narrow to cross.

Then, with the utmost caution, he began crawling through the underbrush toward the Malays who were on guard.

Scarcely twenty minutes had elapsed since he had first set his eyes upon the *Avenger* before he was again in close proximity to her, this time on the same side of the stream that she was.

Heathcoate's heart began to beat violently.

The thunder and lightning still kept up, and the wind shrieked through the branches with a dismal sound.

The rain was still falling heavily, but the Englishman minded it not; he was as dry as a bone beneath his suit of rubber.

Nearer and nearer he approached to the group of Malays on the bank of the stream, and each flash of lightning showed him the outline of the *Avenger* among the proas much plainer.

At last he was within twenty-five feet of the freebooters.

There were about two dozen of them, and they were huddled together in a sort of semi-circle, their faces turned toward the craft they had been commissioned to watch.

They presented a sorry appearance, drenched as they were, but the pirate king had commanded them to remain on guard all night, and they were but obeying him.

Jim Hardcastle and one of his rascally companions were inside of the *Avenger*, though Heathcoate knew it not.

He soon learned it, however, for presently a brilliant flash of lightning lit up the scene, and his close proximity to the craft en-

abled him to see the two men seated in the pilot-house on their tiresome all-night vigil.

"I shall have to be careful," muttered the Englishman; "I am sure I can manage the cursed Malays easy enough, but those two white men—I may have trouble with them. Well, here goes, anyway. I may as well start the ball a-rolling."

Unfastening the satchel or valise that he carried, he drew forth an oblong, dark-looking object.

It was one of the deadly bombs, and he had at least a dozen more in the same leather bag.

Carefully measuring the distance with his practiced eye, Heathcoate drew back his arm, and flung the thing straight in the midst of the group of Malays, after having first ignited the short fuse attached to it.

It was a terrible thing to do, but Heathcoate's deadly hatred of the freebooters caused him to fling the bomb without the least bit of hesitation whatever.

Almost the very instant the bomb struck the ground it exploded with a loud report, knocking the Malays right and left, and blowing some of them literally to pieces.

Then, revolver in hand, the Englishman dashed through the smoke and sprang upon the *Avenger's* deck.

The mutineers met him, nearly frightened out of their wits.

At that moment a brilliant flash of lightning illumined the scene for one brief instant, showing Heathcoate the pale, scared faces of his two foes.

The next moment his revolver cracked twice in rapid succession, and both of the villains fell, one toppling overboard and the other falling back through the door of the pilot-house.

The next instant the daring Englishman had severed the rope which held the boat fast, and pushed her off to the middle of the stream.

But what was he to do now? There was no steam up, and to get enough to run the craft would take the best part of half an hour.

Even now the freebooters were rushing from all parts of their village to the scene of the explosion.

A desperate resolve entered Heathcoate's brain.

He would light the lamps beneath the boiler, and then, as soon as he had raised sufficient steam, start the engine and pick his way down the stream by the flashes of lightning.

In the meantime he would keep his enemies at bay by the hurling of an occasional bomb.

To think with him was to act.

In less than a minute's time he had ignited the wicks of the burners, and then taking his place in the pilot-house, he awaited the onslaught of his foes.

The next moment the Malays came rushing down to the bank of the stream, discharging their guns wildly at the *Avenger* and shouting themselves hoarse.

The Englishman was equal to the emergency.

Hastily lighting one of the bombs, he flung it in their very midst.

Boom!

The terrible thing exploded, creating a fearful havoc among the Malays.

Then, before they had anywhere near recovered themselves, Heathcoate started the engine, and the next moment the *Avenger* was gliding swiftly down the stream.

It seemed that Providence was on Heathcoate's side, for suddenly the storm cleared up as quickly as it had come, and presently the moon struggled through the clouds to light him on his way.

Puff—puff! puff—puff! went the powerful iron-clad vessel, as she steamed swiftly down the stream.

The pirates did not attempt to start in pursuit, they evidently had enough of it for one night.

Heathcoate's spirits were a hundred per-cent. higher, but he was still much worried about Carrie.

That he would rescue her before many hours, though, he felt certain.

In less than ten minutes from the time of his starting he was at the mouth of the stream, and was making his way, through a gap in the reef, out to sea.

He now turned his attention to righting the craft up a bit, and at once cast the body of the dead mutineer overboard.

The Englishman moved the *Avenger* closer inshore, near the mouth of the concealed underground passage, which led to the old ruins.

He glanced anxiously along the shore.

Suddenly he gave a start.

He saw the figure of a man rush from the mouth of the passage, or some place nearby, and run swiftly for the water's edge.

Even as he watched, the man uttered a wild shriek, and throwing up his hands, pitched headlong to the ground.

Heathcoate watched him for fully five minutes, but the body did not move.

"I must see who it is," he muttered, starting the *Avenger* slowly toward the spot.

In five minutes' time he had made a landing, and seizing his rifle he sprang out upon the beach. The form of the stranger lay upon the sand with the face upturned toward the sky, and as Heathcoate saw his face he gave a violent start of surprise.

It was Frank Hall, who had so suddenly gone crazy, that lay before him.

The poor boy's clothing was nearly torn from his body, and he presented a forlorn appearance.

That he was unconscious the Englishman saw at a glance.

A look of pity came over his face, and stooping, he raised the unconscious form of Frank in his arms and carried him aboard the *Avenger*, carefully depositing him in one of the berths.

The boy suddenly broke into a raging fever, and began to talk wildly in his delirium.

Heathcoate at once repaired to the medicine chest and mixed a dose of some kind, which he administered to the lad.

This eased him somewhat, and he soon was in a deep sleep, though the fever did not leave him.

Then returning to the pilot-house, the Englishman backed the boat off the beach and again resumed his watch for some signs of his companions.

At length day broke, and soon the sun arose.

Heathcoate began to grow nervous now, and put out further away from the shore.

Suddenly the report of a cannon rang out on the still morning air, immediately followed by a rattling discharge of musketry.

CHAPTER XX.

JACK ENTERS JUAN DACRESA'S HUT.

Both Larry O'Dowd and the crazy youth listened intently to the sounds of the approaching footsteps.

"Come!" hissed Frank Hall, tightening his grasp upon Larry, "hurry up, and get us out of here!"

But Larry judged that it must certainly be Jack and his companions coming, so he hesitated.

"Wait a minute," said he, hoping to gain time; "I can't find the way."

"You must! See! they are almost here!"

"Who?" asked Larry.

"The man-eaters. Ah! here they come! Now we will both be killed! But I'll make an end of you first, so as to save them the trouble. I'll cut your throat. Ha, ha, ha!"

At that moment Jack Darling's party burst in view around a bend in the tunnel-like passage, carrying a lighted lantern with them.

On seeing them a new idea must have come in the demented boy's head, for suddenly he lowered the gleaming knife, and then gave Larry such a sudden shove that the boy was sent staggering against the wall of the passage; and then uttering a wild, blood-curdling scream, he darted down the passage, scattering those who were advancing right and left before his mad rush.

Before Jack or any of his party could imagine what had transpired Frank Hall was out of sight.

The next moment Larry rushed to meet them.

In a few words as possible he explained what had happened.

"Let us follow him and try and catch him," suggested Captain Jobs.

"No—not for worlds!" hastily replied Larry; "leave him alone for the present. I have had enough to do with a crazy person for one night. I would rather face the entire gang of Malays, with their king at their head, than him again, single-handed. Leave him alone for the present; maybe he will soon return to his right senses, and then it will be different."

"Larry is right," said Jack; "we came to rescue Carrie, and endeavor to steal the *Avenger* from the pirates. We will look to Frank's case later on."

"All right," responded the captain; "come on. We'll enter the hut, if the coast is clear."

He pushed the slab of stone up a little way as he spoke, and listened attentively for a moment.

There was not a sound to be heard save the roaring of the tempest outside, and becoming reassured he turned the stone over entirely and made his way up into the hut, followed by his companions.

The next moment all hands were in the hut.

Jack tried the door.

It was fastened securely on the outside.

"What's to be done now?" he asked.

"We must cut our way through, that's all," replied Captain Jobes.

"Ay, that's it, cap'en," put in Bill Bunt, drawing his sheath-knife and poking it against the side wall of the rude building.

The hut was built of bamboo canes and lined with clay, and he had little or no difficulty in shoving the blade of his knife clean through.

Taking the cue from this, all hands were soon engaged in cutting their way outside.

They soon had an aperture large enough for their purpose, and in a minute's time they had crawled through.

Just as Bill Bunt, who was the last one to emerge from the hole, arose to his feet there came the sound of a loud explosion at the other side of the village.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Jack, "Robert Heathcoate is at work, and no mistake."

The next moment all was confusion in the village, and the Malays began to run from all directions to the stream where the *Avenger* lay.

The rain was falling in torrents, and our friends were soon wet to the skin, but they did not mind this much, as it was warm.

"I wonder which hut the gal air confined in?" said Bill Bunt, as he shook the water from his grizzled locks. "We mought be able ter get her out now while the cussed warmints are worked up so. Let's look around a bit and see if we can find out."

"Stay!" exclaimed Captain Jobes. "I have a better plan; one is not so apt to be seen as all of us would. Let Jack go and see if he can't find out where the girl is imprisoned, while we wait for him in the hut."

This suggestion seemed to suit all hands, so, accordingly, Jack set out.

It was as dark as pitch, and he was only able to find his way by the flashes of lightning.

He glided stealthily into the very heart of the freebooters' village, not seeing a single Malay. The cause of this was owing to the fact that they were all down by the bank of the stream, engaged in putting forth their efforts to prevent Heathcoate from making his escape with the *Avenger*.

Jack judged pretty nearly what had happened, and he felt confident that the daring Englishman would succeed in his undertaking.

At length the boy arrived at the rear of Juan Dacresa's hut.

One of the windows was open, and after a moment's hesitation he crawled in.

It was a risky thing to do, but Jack was noted for his pluck.

He found himself in a small, narrow hallway, through which came a draught of air.

A single glance showed him that the door at the front of the hut was wide open.

"Good enough," muttered Jack; "if any one happens to interfere with me, I shall have a good chance to run for it."

There were two doors in the side of the hallway, and from under one of these there came a faint stream of light.

Jack placed his eye to the keyhole.

He saw the interior of a richly-furnished room, in which was the form of a young girl reclining on a divan.

He could not see the face of the girl, but our hero knew that it was Carrie Heathcoate.

His heart gave a mighty bound.

Now was his chance to rescue the fair prisoner.

Placing his lips to the keyhole of the door, he gave a low hiss.

Carrie started and raised her head.

"Don't be alarmed," said Jack, in a loud whisper; "it is me—Jack Darling."

The girl gave a suppressed cry of joy and sprang to her feet.

Using the heavy knife he carried, he began prying upon the lock.

It was a very light affair, and not adapted for the door of a prison, and presently it yielded.

The next moment the door swung open.

"Come!" exclaimed Jack, "let us be off at once, before Juan Dacresa or some of his villains get back."

The next instant both started for the door, to leave the room.

But they came to a sudden halt, and started as though they had been shot.

Before them stood Ganzees, the mutineer, with a revolver pointed directly at Jack's breast.

CHAPTER XXI.

GANZEES' MISSION.

It would be impossible to depict the look of consternation that came over the faces of Juan Dacresa and Ganzees when the Malays said that Larry O'Dowd had made his escape from the hut.

The superstition in the pirate king's nature began to work upon him, and he trembled visibly. Ganzees was wild with rage, and as soon as he regained the use of his tongue he began to curse and swear at a terrible rate.

Carrie Heathcoate shuddered at the horrible oaths the mutineer uttered, and noticing this, Juan Dacresa led her back to the room she had just been taken from, and again locked the door.

When he came out again he saw that Ganzees and a number of the men were making their way to the hut lately occupied by Larry.

Lighting a cigar to steady his nerves somewhat, he followed.

The crowd at once began searching for a hole in the side of the rude building, but after five minutes they were satisfied that there was none.

The pirate king shrugged his shoulders.

"I tell you that our enemies are in league with the evil one," said he.

"You're a fool!" retorted Ganzees, hotly.

The blood mounted to Juan Dacresa's face.

"What?" he demanded, endeavoring to curb his temper.

"I said you were a fool—and so you are, if you think any of those cursed lubbers are anyway supernatural."

"Why is it that we cannot hold them, then, after we make them prisoners?" asked the king of the freebooters, his complexion changing from a deep red to a livid white.

"Because," sneered Ganzees, "they are not sufficiently guarded. I think that the next time we capture one of them we had better shoot him outright; the difficulty will easily be settled then."

"All right," retorted Juan Dacresa, closing and locking the door of the hut. "You go and catch them at once, and I will have them killed as soon as you bring them in."

"Me go and capture them at once?" echoed the mutineer. "How in thunder am I—"

"It makes no difference, do as I say; and if you don't bring them before me inside of twenty-four hours, I will have your head cut off from your ugly body."

Ganzees turned as white as a sheet.

He knew full well that Juan Dacresa meant what he said.

"Do you mean that?" he hoarsely asked.

"Mean it? Certainly I do. Remember that I rule this island, and that I allow no one to dictate to me. Now be off at once, and do the task I have ordered you to do, or I will change my mind and slay you at once!"

All the rascally pluck in Ganzees' nature suddenly asserted itself.

"I want you to take back that command," he suddenly exclaimed, at the same time drawing his revolver and leveling it at the pirate king's breast.

But Juan Dacresa had observed his move, and almost as suddenly he had drawn his weapon.

There stood the two men, glaring at each other like a pair of wild beasts, with their revolvers leveled at each other.

The rays of the setting sun shone full upon the two men's faces, and as they stood there, surrounded by the dusky horde of villainous-looking cutthroats, they made a very imposing picture.

For fully the space of a minute neither spoke a word. Then, clearing his throat, the pirate king coolly said:

"Well, are you going to do my bidding?"

For a moment Ganzees did not answer, but toyed dangerously with the trigger of his weapon.

Suddenly a thought seemed to strike him.

"Yes," he said, at length, "I will undertake the task; and if I fail you may kill me."

"That is the way to talk. Now, as I said before, go!"

Without deigning to make any reply, Ganzees turned upon his heel and walked from the spot, making his way toward the forest.

When he had disappeared from view, Juan Dacresa repaired to his hut, and began drinking deeply of the strongest spirits his larder contained.

In one hour's time he was as drunk as a lord, and as ugly as a savage lion of the jungle.

Meanwhile, Ganzees continued on his way, hurling curses upon the heads of the Malay pirates and their king.

Arriving well into the forest, he sat down upon the trunk of a fallen tree, and began to meditate over his situation.

The sun had now sunk below the western horizon, and darkness was coming on apace.

A storm was also coming up, and the villain was soon made aware of this fact by several drops of rain falling in his face.

He sprang to his feet with a bound.

"Yes, I'll do it," he muttered. "I can't but fail in the attempt, and if I should succeed—well, then, I guess I'll be somebody."

The villain had concocted a plan in his rascally brain to slay and rob Juan Dacresa, as soon as the night had progressed a little; and then steal away with Carrie Heathcoate, and take the long boat of the *Larkspur*, which lay upon the beach at the other side of the island, and put for one of the neighboring islands.

He argued to himself that the most of the male population would be in the vicinity of the captured *Avenger* to watch her, and this fact would enable him to carry out his undertaking.

Ganzees was well armed, and he was prepared to slay the first one who opposed him.

He kept in the woods until he heard the noise made by the explosion of the bomb Heathcoate had thrown among the Malays on the bank of the stream.

"Aha!" the villain exclaimed, as he gave a start, "Dacresa's unknown enemy is at work with his bombs again. So much the better for me. So far, so good; if I ever expect to get a chance to carry out my plan, now is the time."

The next moment he was making his way hurriedly through the blinding rain in the direction of the freebooters' village.

He heard the noise and confusion the Malays made as they ran to the scene of the explosion, and he chuckled softly to himself.

The wily villain dodged about in the darkness, and at length he stood in the rear of Juan Dacresa's hut.

Even as the mutineer glanced at the bamboo dwelling, he discerned a pair of legs disappear through one of the windows.

The flash of lightning which had revealed this to him had not lasted long enough for him to see more.

He was not a little surprised at this proceeding, and for a moment or so he knew not what course to pursue.

At length he concluded to enter the hut by the same means, and see who it was that was so cautiously entering the king's abode.

"Some one come to rescue the girl, I'll bet my life!" he muttered, as he placed his hands upon the window sill preparatory to going in.

The next instant he had made his way noiselessly through the window, and stood in the hallway.

A door was open a few feet from him, through which streamed a dim light.

Ganzees peered in.

Before him stood Jack Darling and the girl prisoner, just making a move to leave the room.

In the twinkling of an eye he had drawn his revolver and stood facing Jack.

Carrie gave a slight scream of dismay as she saw the malignant face of the mutineer, while Jack's hand involuntarily flew to his belt.

"Stop!" exclaimed Ganzees; "none of that; hands up, or I'll shoot you dead, just as sure as two and two make four."

"What do you want?" asked Jack, in a mild tone of voice.

"I want the girl; hand her over, and you can go about your business."

Our hero was a little bit astonished at this reply, but his eyes flashed fire, nevertheless.

"You want the girl?"

"Yes."

"Well, you can't have her."

"I can't, eh?"

"No."

"We'll see about that. Come, no more fooling; time is precious. Hand over what weapons you have got and leave the house immediately, or I'll shoot you like a dog!"

"You will, eh?"

The next moment Jack made a sudden dive between the villain's legs, upsetting him and sending his revolver flying from his grasp.

Then, before he could recover from his astonishment at the sudden move, our hero dealt him a blow between the eyes with the butt of his revolver, knocking him senseless.

Tearing the silken cord from one of the curtains in the room, he bound him securely hand and foot.

Leaving the mutineer lying where he was, Jack seized Carrie by the hand, and the two left the hut.

They were not a moment too soon, for at that moment Juan Dacresa came staggering in, too much intoxicated to notice them, though he almost brushed against them as they passed.

The pirate king no sooner entered the door than he saw that something was wrong.

Muttering incoherently, he rolled rather than walked into the room lately occupied by the girl prisoner.

He stumbled headlong over the body of Ganzees almost the first thing.

This roused the latter to his senses.

In a moment he saw who it was that was in the room with him.

"Untie me, Dacresa—quick," he exclaimed, "one of your enemies has made off with the girl!"

"They have, eh? Then you will—hic—die!"

Drawing his revolver, the pirate king began shooting it wildly at the villain upon the floor.

CHAPTER XXII.

"THE PASSAGE HAS CAVED IN!"

Jack Darling hurried along with his fair charge until he arrived at the spot where he had left his companions.

As soon as they saw him they gave a suppressed cheer and rushed to meet him.

"Hurry up!" exclaimed Captain Jobs; "we have not a moment to lose."

The next instant they were hurrying through the hole in the side of the hut.

But before half of their number had crawled through there was a wild shout close at hand, and a number of Malays, bearing torches in their hands, came rushing toward them.

They had been discovered at the last moment.

Bang! bang! went a couple of muskets in the hands of the dusky horde, the bullets whistling in dangerous proximity to the heads of the fugitives.

Jack was the last to enter the break in the side of the hut, and as he did so he turned and poured half a dozen shots from his Winchester repeater into the ranks of the advancing Malays, who were now close upon them.

This action served to check them for a moment, but only for a moment, and then they came rushing down upon the hut like the wind.

When Jack gained the interior all had lowered themselves into the tunnel save Larry, and he followed as soon as he saw Jack was safe.

Just as our hero swung his legs into the opening the savages burst into the hut, both through the doorway and the break in the wall.

Down went Jack, pulling the stone slab in its place as he dropped. But the dusky pirates had discovered the secret means of exit from the hut now, and uttering a wild yell of joy, they tore up the slab, tumbling one after the other into the passage.

But our friends were fleeing like the wind down the narrow place, and in a moment they were lost to sight around a bend.

The Malays were bent on capturing them, however, and they immediately started in hot pursuit.

Away went the fugitives, until they arrived at the cellar of the ruins, and then Jack shut the iron door with a clang, locking it securely.

Thus far they were safe, though it had been an exciting chase. Three or four minutes more and they were in the secret apartments, in company with Pete, the darkey, and the butler and his wife.

All hands breathed a sigh of relief.

"That was a close call, blow me if it wasn't!" exclaimed Bill Bunt, wiping the perspiration from his brow.

"You're right," chimed in Larry.

"I suppose Juan Dacresa, as soon as he hears of this, will begin tearing the building down to capture us," said Jack.

"He will have a good job doing it," replied Captain Jobs.

"But he will accomplish it, never fear," said Carrie Heathcoate. "If we could only find out that my uncle made his escape with the *Avenger*, we could board her, and then we would be safe enough."

"Better leab dis drefful place, anyway," put in Pete, speaking for the first time.

"We are going to leave you here, anyhow, Pete, when we go away," said Larry, jokingly, as he turned to the darkey.

"No—no, Massa Larry! don't say dat, or I die for suah!" exclaimed the frightened negro.

"Niggers air no good, nohow," muttered Bill Bunt, as he turned away with a look of disgust upon his weather-beaten countenance at the darkey's display of fear.

The rest of the party smiled in spite of their situation.

"I wonder what has become of poor Frank?" Jack at length said.

"T'ink him been in dis place, Massa Jack," replied Pete; "we hear somebody downstairs a little while back, an' him voice sound like Massa Frank."

"What!" exclaimed all hands, in a breath.

"Yes, me t'ink it must be him. Putty soon him gone, dough; an' it scare us putty bad, an' don't yo' fergit it."

The butler and his wife at once corroborated the darkey's story, and then Jack and his companions were satisfied that it had really been Frank who had been in the building.

"I tell you what I am going to do," suddenly said our hero.

"What?" asked Larry.

"I am going down the passage to the shore, and see if I can see any signs of Heathcoate."

"Why can't I accompany you?"

"You can."

"All right; lead the way."

No objections being made by any of the rest of the party, they at once started.

It did not take the two boys long to reach the commencement of the passage, and soon they were traversing its narrow way.

Eyes and ears on the *qui vive*, they kept on, and presently they were near its outlet at the shore.

"Strange," said Jack, "that we don't see any signs of the moonlight at the end of the passage. It has ceased raining this good while, and the moon must certainly be up."

"That's so," assented Larry.

"I wonder——"

At that moment Jack came to a sudden halt.

"What is the matter?" asked his companion.

"Matter enough!" exclaimed our hero. "The tunnel has caved in from above!"

Holding the lantern he carried in front of him, Larry saw that this was true.

From some unknown cause the earth had given way, after it had stood for such a number of years.

That it had just happened a few minutes previous, was plainly evident, as even now a fresh lot of earth came tumbling down nearly upon them.

The two boys began to beat a hasty retreat.

"We had better get out of this as quickly as possible," said Jack, "or we will be buried before our time comes."

"I should say so," returned Larry, with a startled look upon his face.

Back to the old, ruined cathedral went the boys, as fast as their legs could carry them.

In a little while they were again in the presence of Captain Jobs and the rest of the party.

"Well?" said Carrie, as a look of anxious inquiry came over her face.

"We are double-banked!" exclaimed Jack. "One underground passage is blocked by the pirates, and the other has caved in."

"Caved in?" echoed Captain Jobs.

"Yes—caved in. The earth has given way over the passage leading to the shore near its mouth, and all further progress in that direction is cut off."

To say that the party were surprised at this piece of intelligence would be putting it mildly.

They were dumfounded.

A look of dismay overspread Carrie's face.

"That is the reason my uncle has not arrived," said she. "He is probably waiting for an opportunity to enter through the main entrance of the building."

"I hardly think he would leave the *Avenger* alone, anyway, if he has succeeded in capturing her," said the captain.

"That's so," chimed in the others.

"Well, there is nothing to do but to wait for morning to come, and see what will turn up then," remarked our hero.

Acting on this suggestion, they turned in to get what sleep they could, and see what the morrow would bring forth.

All hands were up with the sun, and Jack, Larry and Captain Jobs made their way to the topmost room of the old ruins to see if they could observe anything new.

At that instant the boom of a heavy gun was heard, followed by the rattling discharge of a number of muskets, which could plainly be heard on the still, morning air.

The three rushed to the window and glanced out at the sea.

A startling sight met their gaze.

They beheld a conflict raging close inshore between a full-rigged brig and a perfect horde of the pirates in their proas.

Even as they looked, the low hull of the *Avenger* came in view, steaming straight toward the scene of the conflict.

But in another moment her prow was turned in the opposite direction, and she was soon lost to view behind a jutting headland.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CAPTURE OF THE HYSPERIA.

Before Juan Dacresa had half emptied the chambers of his revolver, his drunken condition caused him to pitch headlong to the floor, beside Ganzees.

In another moment he was snoring loudly.

At length the body of the mutineer moved, and presently he raised his head.

"Dacresa, your aim was bad," said he, venomously, as he glared at the drunken king. "Not one of your bullets touched me; a good job for me that you were in the condition you are."

Then the villain began to exert his utmost strength to snap the silken cord Jack Darling had bound him with.

Suddenly the bands about his wrists parted.

An exultant cry came from his lips, and he at once freed his legs from their bonds.

In another moment he was upon his feet, surveying the form of the intoxicated king, who was now snoring away musically enough.

Utilizing the cords he had just broken from, Ganzees began to tie up the sleeping villain, not forgetting to double the rope to make it secure.

"Now, then," muttered the mutineer, "I'll wait until you wake up, and then I'll talk business to you."

Then closing all the doors and windows in the house, he began searching about to find something to amuse himself with until Dacresa awoke.

After a few minutes' search he came across the closet which contained the pirate's liquors and cigars.

Ganzees helped himself, and throwing himself upon a rich divan, prepared to take things easy.

He was not a little surprised that some of the Malays had not rushed in when Dacresa had discharged his weapon in his drunken frenzy. But he judged that they knew better than to interfere with their king, especially when he was under the influence of liquor.

There was a guitar standing in a corner of the room, and having been acquainted with the instrument in his younger days, Ganzees tuned it and began playing an old Spanish love song.

The music was sweet and thrilling, and presently Juan Dacresa began to move uneasily in his sleep.

At length he awoke, and endeavored to rise to a sitting posture. Then he began to realize that he was bound hand and foot.

His brain was still muddled, but he gradually came to his senses.

Presently his eyes lighted upon Ganzees seated upon the divan, with a cigar between his teeth and playing upon the guitar. A look of blank, dumfounded amazement came over his countenance.

"I say, there! What does this mean?" he asked.

The mutineer paid no attention to him, but kept on twanging upon the guitar.

"What does this mean?" he roared, in a louder key.

"Shut up! or I'll be compelled to gag you," replied Ganzees, puffing away upon his cigar.

"What am I doing here? How came I to be tied up in this manner?" yelled the pirate king.

Thinking that his noise would be apt to attract the attention of some one outside, Ganzees arose from the divan, and putting the guitar down, walked to his side.

"So you want to know what this all means, do you?" he said.

"Yes, I do."

"Well, listen, and I'll tell you."

"Go on; I'm listening."

"It was only a little while ago that you had me fully in your power, was it not?"

"Yes," answered the pirate king, realizing only too well that Ganzees had it all his own way.

"You sent me on a mission which you were sure I could not perform, did you not?"

"Yes."

"And if I refused what was to be the penalty?"

"You were to have your head cut off," said Juan Dacresa, coolly.

"Well, I have turned the tables on you, have I not?"

"Yes."

"Well, are you willing to call it square if I set you free?"

"Yes, I am."

"Are you a man of your word?"

"I have never been known to go back on anything I said."

"Will you take back what you said about having my head cut off, and will you treat me as your equal as long as I remain on the island?"

The mutineer held his revolver within an inch of the king's face as he asked the question.

"I will," said Dacresa.

"Swear it."

"I swear it."

"All right; I'll untie you, and then we can talk matters over."

In another minute he was as good as his word, and Juan Dacresa arose to his feet, still staggering from the effects of the liquor he had drunk.

"Sit down," said Ganzees, as though he owned the house.

The pirate king obeyed.

"Seeing that you are boss of the situation, it is a wonder you wouldn't ask me to have a drink of something to brace me up a bit."

"Oh, yes," returned Ganzees. "What will you have?"

"A little brandy."

The villain at once procured a decanter containing the liquor, and poured out two glasses.

"Here's luck," said he, as he drained his glass.

Dacresa nodded and followed his example.

"Well, shall we talk business now?"

"Yes; I am willing."

"What do you think of me, anyway?"

"I think you are my equal in everything, and I am willing to take you in as a side partner, providing that you will agree to my retaining the title of king of the Malay freebooters."

"Certainly; I'll agree to that."

"All right, then; let's have another drink."

The brandy was poured out, and the two villains drank to each other's health.

Drink after drink followed, and soon they had forgotten all about the difficulty that had existed between them.

Presently Juan Dacresa slipped from his chair and rolled upon the floor, and for the second time that night began to snore in a drunken slumber.

Ganzees managed to take another horn of the brandy; and then he, too, joined his companion in taking a nap.

Soon it seemed as though each was striving to outdo the other in snoring the loudest.

It must have been near daybreak, when there came a loud knocking upon the door of the hut.

Both villains roused up.

"Who's there?" demanded the pirate king.

It was one of his most trusted Malay followers who answered, and he at once went to the door.

A few words of conversation in the native tongue ensued between the two, and Dacresa came hurriedly back to Ganzees' side.

"Come," said he, "there is an American brig coming this way, and we are going to attack and capture her."

"I am with you, I'm sure," retorted the mutineer. "But let us steady our nerves a bit first with a drink."

The king nodded his head in assent, and both rascals imbibed. Then, adding a cutlass apiece to their complement of weapons, the two sallied forth from the hut.

The Malay who had brought the news was in waiting, and he at once began telling what had happened the night before; how Jack Darling's party had been traced to the old ruins through the underground passage, and that a number of the freebooters were guarding the hut where the passage began, so that it was impossible for them to escape by that way.

The king smiled in a satisfactory manner.

"We will attend to the brig; and then, as soon as we are through with her, we will wind up the career of our hitherto secret enemies," said he, as he explained the condition of affairs to the mutineer.

Ganzees was delighted at hearing that Jack Darling's hiding place had been discovered, and his spirits were up to the top notch as he walked by the side of Dacresa to the stream where the proas lay.

"It is too bad that we lost that steam vessel last night. She would have been of good use on this expedition."

"So they got her back, eh?"

"Yes; and one man did the whole business, too."

"Well, never mind; I have not the least idea but we will get her back again before many days."

"Yes, and the whole gang connected with her will have passed in their checks by that time," said the pirate, as he took his seat in one of the proas which was in waiting for him.

Ganzees took charge of one of the others, in which was his white companions.

By the time the sun arose the boats, which numbered twenty-five or thirty, were at the mouth of the stream.

The brig they were about to attack was about a quarter of a mile off shore, and was lying apparently at a standstill, there being not the least breath of air stirring.

As soon as the dusky horde emerged from the mouth of the stream they were observed by those on board the brig, and preparations were at once made to repel the attack, though it looked as though they would stand but little show with the overwhelming number of fierce Malays.

When the pirates were about halfway the distance to the brig, a cannon loaded with nails and bits of iron was discharged at them from her deck.

It raked one of the proas fore and aft, killing the inmates to a man.

But this did not deter Juan Dacresa from his determination of capturing her, and, as he gave the order, a hundred muskets were discharged at those on the vessel's deck.

The veritable leaden hail swooped over the brig's deck, killing half a dozen men and wounding as many more.

They made a rally and loaded their piece again, pointing it at the advancing pirates.

Ganzees turned pale as he saw the black muzzle of the cannon staring him in the face, for the distance between them was short now.

Boom!

The heavy piece belched forth its terrible hail of scrap iron.

But the man who had leveled the gun must have become nervous, for its contents whizzed fully a dozen feet over the heads of the pirates.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Juan Dacresa, as he saw the effect of the shot. "That will be the last time you fire that gun, I'll wager my life on it."

Bang! bang! bang!

The muskets began cracking steadily now.

The crew of the brig made a gallant stand, but in five minutes more her deck literally swarmed with the blood-thirsty Malays.

"Take no prisoners—slay all!" shouted the pirate king, above the din of the conflict.

It was but a short struggle at the best, and in fifteen minutes

from the time the freebooters had gained a footing upon the deck the brig was theirs.

Then the work of conveying her cargo ashore was begun.

When the eyes of Ganzees lit upon the cannon, he exclaimed:

"Don't forget that, Decresa; we will need it for the benefit of our enemies in the ruins."

"Sure enough," replied Juan Dacresa; and he gave the order at once to have the gun conveyed ashore.

The name of the brig was the *Hysperia*, of Boston, and a fine craft she was, too. But notwithstanding her fine qualities, she was doomed; by noon everything of value had been taken from her, and then scuttling her, the pirates returned to the shore.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ATTACK ON THE OLD RUINS.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Jack, as the *Avenger* disappeared from sight, "Heathcoate evidently doesn't want to take a hand in the fight."

"You can't blame him, single-handed as he is," replied Captain Jobs.

"Let's go down to the shore and signal to him," suggested Larry.

"How are you going to get there?"

"Why, go out through the main entrance to this place."

"And get gobbled up by the Malays as soon as you show yourself?"

"But they have all gone out to attack the brig."

"Not much," said Jack. "In my opinion, enough have remained behind to watch this place from all sides, knowing as they do now that we are here."

"You are right, lad," put in the captain; "they are not such fools as to go away and leave this old building unguarded."

As if to verify his words, at that moment the crack of a musket was heard, and a bullet whistled through the window unpleasantly near their heads.

It was followed by another and another, and our three friends gave up the idea of witnessing the fight on the sea, and sought safer quarters below among the rest of the party.

All hands were not a little disconcerted when they heard that the Malays were in such close proximity to the building, but Carrie Heathcoate's eyes brightened when she heard the *Avenger* was safe.

The day passed until the middle of the afternoon came.

Jack was just thinking of venturing out in search of Heathcoate, when a heavy report rang out nearby.

The next instant there was a violent crashing of falling stones and debris, and they felt the building shake.

The faces of Jack and his party turned pale.

The attack on the ruins had begun.

That they had a cannon was plainly evident to those inside, for in a few minutes the loud report again rang out, and a part of the ceiling above their heads gave way, allowing a good-sized cannon ball to drop through on the floor.

"De good Lord deliber us!" moaned Pete, the darkey, dropping upon his knees and beginning to pray in the style of his race.

The heavy piece was fired at regular intervals, every shot doing more or less damage.

At length, near nightfall, the besieged party heard the sound of rushing feet in the corridors of the cathedral.

Juan Dacresa and his men had entered the building.

But little damage had been done as yet to the secret apartments, and search about as they would, the pirates were unable to find those they were in quest of.

The pirate king's face grew as black as a thunder-cloud.

"Perdition seize them!" he exclaimed; "they are nowhere in the building."

"They must be," said Ganzees, as he stroked his chin thoughtfully. "I've got an idea, Dacresa."

"What is it?"

"The building is composed entirely of woodwork inside; suppose we set fire to it, and then completely surround it, so that if they do come out, we will be able to make short work of them?"

"Your idea is a good one, and it shall be carried out immediately," replied Juan Dacresa, brightening up.

In a minute or two he had given the order to his men, and

presently a number of them were engaged in carrying armfuls of dry brushwood into the lower extension of the ruins.

As soon as he thought he had enough, the mass of tinder-like substance was ignited, and soon there was a roaring blaze.

Snap! crackle! went the flames, and the woodwork in the building, being old and dry, caught immediately.

Soon a dense smoke was pouring from every opening in the old cathedral.

The Malays were spread in a double line around the building, and Juan Dacresa and Ganzees watched the scene with interest.

Probably ten minutes had passed before the inmates of the building became aware that it was on fire, and when they did so their faces blanched.

It seemed that they were doomed, after all.

A deep silence reigned among them for a minute.

Suddenly Jack started to his feet.

"Don't give up yet!" he exclaimed. "I think I see a way out of this."

"What is it?" came from the lips of all those present.

"We will collect all the food and water we have and take refuge in the passage that has caved in at its mouth. We can safely stay there until the fire has burned out and our enemies have departed."

His companions caught on this as a drowning man clutches a straw, and preparations were at once made for a hasty exit down the secret stairway to the tunnel-like passage below.

In an exceedingly short space of time the entire party, including the butler and his wife, were descending the narrow, dark stairway, single file.

In another minute they had entered the underground passage, and closed and barred the iron door securely from the inside.

It was damp and noisome in these narrow quarters, but it was much better than roasting alive.

Meanwhile the fire continued to rage, the pirates waiting patiently for the imprisoned ones to appear.

At length an hour passed by.

The old cathedral was now even with the ground, save one solitary wall, which remained standing.

At length, as this fell with a crash, Ganzees said:

"Do you think it possible that our enemies could have burned up in the building?"

"No," replied the pirate king, "I don't think they were in there at all."

"Where could they have gone to? You know that they were there this morning—some of your men shot at them through the windows upstairs."

"Yes, I know that; but where they are now is a question for you and me to find out. You can't make me believe that they perished in the flames, though."

"You can't tell," muttered Ganzees, half to himself.

"Well, be it as it may, they have outwitted us; for if they perished they had more nerve than I've got, and if they have escaped it shows that they are more shrewd than we are."

It was growing dark now, and having delivered himself of these words, Juan Dacresa called his men from the smoldering ruins and started for the village, in anything but a pleasant frame of mind.

CHAPTER XXV.

JACK'S SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE.

After remaining in the tunnel for an hour or more, Jack concluded to open the iron door and take a look at his surroundings.

"It must certainly be dark by this time," said he, "and the fire must be about over."

"It's more'n likely," spoke up Bill Bunt. "Jist make sure that nobody air round, and then we kin git out an' breathe some fresh air."

Jack unfastened the door and drew it open.

A cloud of dust and ashes rushed in, nearly blinding the party.

"Whew!" whistled Captain Jobs; "shut the door—quick! We will have to wait a while, until the dust settles, before we venture out."

Our hero obeyed him with alacrity.

He did not relish the hot blast of ashes himself.

The time passed slowly enough in the pent-up quarters of the little party.

"I am going to open the door again," said Jack, after a long interval.

"A good idea," replied Larry. "I guess it must have cooled off a little by this time."

"Surely," put in the captain. "There was not much wood-work about the building, and it must have burned up long before this."

Jack opened the door.

Everything was quiet, though the air which came in was still very hot.

Captain Jobs held a lantern aloft, and they looked out in front of them.

All hands gave a start of surprise.

The huge blocks of stone the cathedral had been constructed of had fallen in a mighty heap, in such a manner that all sight of the outer world had been completely cut off.

A single glance showed them that nothing short of blasting powder or dynamite would remove them.

They were hemmed in like rats in a trap.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Bill Bunt, "we are in az 'bout az bad a fix az me an' Job Jangles whar when we waked up an' seed ther big woman a-standin' in front of us."

"Let us wait until morning before we make an attempt to do anything," said Jack; "for if there are any cracks or crevices between the stones at all, the sunlight will surely come through, and we can see what we are about then."

"A good idea," remarked Captain Jobs, as he seated himself upon the damp floor of the passage.

It was with a feeling of despair that the others followed his example.

The hours passed by.

At length the morning came.

Jack gave a joyful cry and sprang to his feet.

A ray of sunlight had forced its way through somewhere between the rocks, lighting the place up with a faint glow.

Jack stepped out of the passage to investigate more closely.

Suddenly he gave a cry and disappeared, amid a cloud of ashes, before the very eyes of his companions.

Down he went for about twenty feet, and then he landed in a heap upon a hard, stone floor.

The fall almost took the breath from his body, and it was several moments before he could regain his scattered senses.

It was as dark as a pocket in the place where he had landed, and he could not for the life of him imagine where he had fallen to.

Drawing a match from his pocket, he struck it and held it in front of him.

Did his eyes deceive him, or was he dreaming?

Around him, in various directions, were scattered numerous urns, cups, candle-sticks and drinking vessels of all shapes.

Our hero's instinct told him that they were composed of virgin gold.

"Glory!" he shouted, in wild excitement at this sudden find. "I shall go home with a fortune!"

At that moment his match went out, and he was again in darkness.

He lighted another, and just as he did so he heard a voice above him exclaim:

"Hello, Jack! are you hurt?"

It was Larry O'Dowd who spoke.

Before Jack could make a reply, there was a shower of dust and ashes, followed by a wild yell of alarm.

The next moment Larry struck feet foremost in the place beside our hero and rolled over on his stomach.

Jack immediately raised him to a sitting posture.

"Are you hurt, old fellow?" he anxiously asked.

It was a minute or two before Larry could speak, and when he did so he said:

"No, not much, I guess; but I am badly shaken up, though. How did you fare when you took the sudden dive?"

"Just about the same as you did. But how came you to be so careless as to fall in after you had seen me disappear?" asked our hero.

"The ground gave way with me at the very edge of the passage, and down I came."

"Shake hands!" suddenly exclaimed Jack.

Larry obeyed.

"Now I want you to congratulate me, yourself and all the rest of the party."

"What for?" asked Larry, wonderingly.

"Because I have found a buried treasure. This is what you can call Jack Darling's luck. See!"

And he struck a match.

Larry was thunderstruck at the golden display before him.

"Jack, old fellow, you're rich!" said he.

"So are you and the rest of the party. We shall divide this treasure equally."

As near as the two boys could judge by the light of the match, the vault—for such it really was—was about twenty feet square.

"We must have a light," said Jack. "Hello, up there! Just hold the lantern over the side of this vault we have fallen in, won't you?"

The words had scarcely died upon his lips when Captain Jobs obeyed the request.

"Are you both safe?" came from the captain's lips, as he leaned his head cautiously over.

"Yes," returned Jack; "can you manage to get down here?"

"What for? I think I had better devise some means to get you boys out."

"No, you hadn't; we don't want to get out just yet," replied Larry.

"We've struck something a heap better than a gold mine," added our hero.

"What is it?"

"Come down at once," was all the reply the captain got.

Becoming curious as to what the two boys had found, he began to think of some method to reach them.

Carrie helped him out of the difficulty.

"There is a coil of small rope among the things we brought from the room in the old building; why not use that?" said she.

"Just the thing!" exclaimed the captain.

The next moment he had the rope, which was long enough to reach four times the required length, in his hands.

Fastening it securely to one of the hinges on the iron door, he swung himself over the mouth of the hole, and the next moment he was gliding gently downward, taking the lantern with him.

In the space of a minute he had landed on the floor of the vault.

The lantern cast its dull rays about the place, lighting it up with a sort of ghostly glare.

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the captain, as his eyes lighted upon the golden relics the vault contained. "What have we here?"

"Something which is a heap better than a gold mine, as I said before!" retorted Jack.

"You are right!" cried Larry, wild with enthusiasm, moving toward a corner of the stone apartment.

Suddenly he stumbled over a heavy chest.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "What is this?"

Jack and the captain rushed to his side with the lantern.

"A treasure chest, by Jove!" said our hero. "See, it's locked."

"That's just what it is, my lads," remarked the captain, as he examined it.

"That being the case, the next thing is, how are we going to get it open?" Jack observed, as he seized hold of the hasp to which the lock was attached.

To his surprise, it came off into his hands.

The next instant he threw the lid back quite easily.

Our three friends nearly jumped out of their skins.

The chest was filled with golden coins.

For fully a minute they stood glaring with distended eyes at the sight before them.

It was a veritable king's ransom that they were gazing upon.

At length Jack took half a dozen of the coins in his hand and began to examine them.

They were of Spanish denomination, dated in the seventeenth century.

Larry rubbed his eyes and blinked like an owl, while Captain Jobs shrugged his shoulders and began pacing back and forth nervously.

"Boys," said he, "this is wonderful. This island has been inhabited at some time or another with a race of the Lord only knows what kind of people; but as these golden coins are Spanish, we will have to take it for granted that they belonged to that nationality. At any rate, no one has a better right to this treasure than we, for according to the date upon the coins, they have been here for more than two hundred years."

"It must have been they, then, who constructed the secret passages," said Jack.

"Undoubtedly," returned the captain. "The cathedral must have been used as a place of worship, and this vault as a storage place for their riches."

While they had been examining the place and conversing, Bill Bunt had been busily engaged with his deft fingers in constructing a rude ladder from the rope, and the first they became aware of this was when the old salt stepped to their side, after having made his way into the vault.

He looked at the sight in open-mouthed amazement.

"All hands might as well have a sight of the golden treasure, just as it lays," said Jack, as he made his way to the ladder.

In a minute he had made his way up the ladder out of the vault, and in five more Carrie Heathcoate, Pete, the darkey, the engineer and the butler and his wife had followed him back into it.

Exclamations of joy and surprise were heard upon all sides for the next ten minutes.

At length Jack took the lantern and began making a thorough survey of the vault.

At almost every step he came upon something they had failed to see before.

His attention was called to a small, iron-bound box, about ten inches square.

Examination showed him that it was locked, but he thought he saw a way out of the difficulty.

Drawing his revolver, he placed the muzzle of it to the key-hole of the box, and then turning his head, pulled the trigger.

The weapon went off with a loud report, causing innumerable echoes to pervade the place.

But it sufficed to do just what our hero hoped it would, for it shattered the lock, which held the lid of the box fast.

In the twinkling of an eye he had opened it, and sat gazing into its contents.

The rest of the party rushed to his side and looked in dumfounded amazement at the box and what was in it.

"Well, that beats anything yet!" exclaimed Captain Jobes.

Well might he say so.

The little box was literally packed with precious stones.

There were diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds—and, in fact, everything in the line of valuable stones.

"Let's divide," said Larry, excitedly. "Jack, the biggest share belongs to you, as you were the first to find the vault."

At that moment a noise was heard at the top of the rope ladder, and a voice exclaimed:

"Hello, there! what's the matter with you all? Have you gone crazy?"

Every eye was turned upward at once.

They beheld the form of Robert Heathcoate in the act of descending into the vault.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON BOARD THE AVENGER.

When Heathcoate came in sight of the pirates attacking the brig, he quickly stopped the engine and turned the *Avenger* around.

He did not relish the idea of mixing up in any fight single-handed.

As he rounded a point, he saw that the prow of his craft was pointing directly for the wreck of the *Larkspur*.

An idea struck the Englishman.

"I'll make for the wreck," he muttered, "and tie up on the outside of her. Then I will be able to attend to the sick boy a bit."

The *Avenger* went skimming like a thing of life toward the wreck.

In ten minutes' time Heathcoate had the *Larkspur's* hull placed between him and the shore, and he at once proceeded to make fast to her.

After completing this task, he descended below to where he had left Frank Hall.

The poor boy still lay in his berth, burning with the fever and talking incoherently.

Now, Heathcoate had studied for a doctor in his younger days, and he at once brought out all the medical skill he could command to assist him.

He rubbed his hand over the boy's head, and at once came across a wound on its side.

The Englishman saw that it was a slight depression in the skull, and this had undoubtedly caused Frank's temporary insanity.

Administering a strong opiate to his patient, Heathcoate soon had him in a deep sleep. Then going to a case of instruments, he selected one, and undertook the task of righting the dent, or fracture, or whatever it could be called.

In ten minutes he had successfully performed the operation, and just as he had concluded it Frank Hall opened his eyes.

"Where am I? What has happened?" asked the boy. "Oh, I'm so hungry!"

"Lie still—don't talk—and I'll get you something to eat," said Heathcoate.

In a few minutes he had prepared some beef tea, and began to feed it to Frank with a spoon.

It strengthened the boy, and in a little while he was able to sit up and partake of something heartier.

Heathcoate kept the *Avenger* behind the wreck the entire day, for fear that she would be observed by some of the pirates on the island.

Just before night he detected a heavy smoke rising from the island.

"I wonder where that comes from?" he thought. "Surely Dacres cannot have discovered the party's hiding place and set fire to the building!"

His face turned pale at the thought.

"I must see at once," he said, "for likely as not that is the case."

Going below, he saw that Frank Hall was sitting up in his berth, his fever having entirely disappeared.

"Lie down again, my boy," said he, "and don't leave your berth. You have been very sick the past few days, and you must be as quiet as possible for a while yet. Your friends are in great danger at this moment, and I am going ashore to see if I can be of any aid to them. I want you to promise me that you will do just as I say when I leave the *Avenger* and go ashore."

"I promise," said Frank.

The boy's eyes now had their natural look. His insane mood had left him as suddenly as it came.

As soon as darkness set in, Heathcoate turned the prow of the vessel in the direction of the shore where the passage leading to the cellar of the ruins came out.

Arriving here, he saw surely that it was the old ruins that had been burned.

"They must have surely thought of one of the underground passages as a place of refuge," he muttered, as he stepped ashore, rifle in hand.

Proceeding cautiously, he at length came to the spot.

A low cry of surprise came from his lips.

The earth above the passage had caved in.

"Aha!" thought Heathcoate, when he had recovered from his astonishment at the discovery, "all hands are undoubtedly in the passage. I must set myself to digging them out."

Going back to the *Avenger*, he procured a shovel and pick, and tackled the job ahead of him.

It was a bigger task than he had thought, but when Robert Heathcoate once undertook anything he never desisted until he had accomplished it; and, besides, he had got it in his head that his niece and her companions were in the tunnel-like passage.

He judged that as long as he worked quietly, so as not to attract the attention of the pirates, he was not likely to be troubled.

On he worked, but the ground was deep above the roof of the passage, and as fast as he dug it kept caving in.

He worked steadily until midnight, and then desisted for a while, and went aboard the *Avenger* to see how his patient was making out.

The boy was sleeping soundly, and after resting a few minutes, he again started in at his work.

All night long he kept at work with untiring energy, and at length, just as morning dawned, he began to gain rapidly.

The question then came up as to whether he had better quit and retire to the wrecked *Larkspur* until night set in again, or to keep right on and run the risk of being seen by the Malays.

He chose the latter course after a moment's thought.

"For," he argued to himself, "my companions must be in need of assistance badly, and it is not likely that any of Dacres's gang will come this way yet a while. I will keep right on, and find the end of this adventure."

In fifteen minutes more he had the mouth of the passage clear, and in another moment he was making his way rapidly along it.

At length he came to the end.

He came to a sudden pause.

The iron door was open, showing him a pile of huge, blackened stones, between which came the rays of the morning sun.

Almost at the same instant he caught the confused sound of voices coming from somewhere below him.

Then he saw the opening almost at his feet.

In another moment he had dropped upon his knees, and was peering over the edge.

He saw all hands of the party he was in search of in a group on the floor of the vault.

Heathcoate gazed in silence at them for fully two minutes, and then uttered the words already recorded at the conclusion of the last chapter.

As our friends saw that it was really Robert Heathcoate who was gazing upon them from above, they uttered a glad shout.

"Come down!" exclaimed Bill Bunt, excitedly, "and see what we hev found."

Heathcoate obeyed. He had already caught a glimpse of the shining gold the vault contained.

Soon he was as much excited as the rest.

At last Jack Darling began to come to his senses.

Arising to his feet, he addressed Heathcoate.

"How did you get here?" he asked.

"Oh!" said the Englishman, and he proceeded to relate what had transpired since he last saw them.

All hands were agreeably surprised when they heard of Frank Hall's case.

"Well," said Jack, at length, "the next thing in order is to get this treasure on board the *Avenger*, and then we can bid good-by to the pirates and their island."

"No," replied the Englishman. "I came to this island to accomplish a certain purpose, and I shall never leave it until I have succeeded in my undertaking."

"At any rate," said Carrie, "we can convey this gold aboard at once."

"Certainly," responded her uncle; "and let us be as quick as possible, for even now the pirates may have discovered the whereabouts of the *Avenger*."

In another minute they had begun the work of conveying the vault's treasure up into the passage.

Heathcoate, Larry and Bill Bunt took the first load aboard the *Avenger*, and found her all right.

They remained on board until the rest of the party arrived, loaded with as much as they could carry.

Then Heathcoate remained on board with Carrie and the butler and his wife, allowing the others to finish the work.

In three hours' time their task was finished, and then the *Avenger's* prow was turned toward the wreck again.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BURNING OF THE PIRATES' VILLAGE.

Frank Hall gained so rapidly after Heathcoate had performed the operation on his wounded head that Jack and the rest of the party were able to converse quite freely with him.

They refrained from telling him of his many crazy exploits, and to this day Frank believes that he had been on board of the *Avenger* all the time during his strange sickness.

As soon as the *Avenger* was safely tied to the wreck of the *Larkspur*, Heathcoate went off by himself and began to grow moody again.

He remained this way all day long, and did not once join in the merry, light-hearted conversation of the others.

At length, as the sun set, he began to brighten up, and his eyes began to flash with the same unnatural glow that Jack had noticed in them on a former occasion, when he had asked him to accompany him on a trip to Juan Dacresa's village from the old ruins.

"I hope he don't ask me to go along with him now," thought our hero.

But he was destined to be disappointed.

As soon as darkness had set in, Heathcoate began to make preparations to run the *Avenger* ashore.

He glanced at Jack.

"Take the wheel and run her to the shore, near the tunnel, won't you?" he asked.

"Certainly," responded our hero, and the next moment the lines had been cast off and the wonderful little vessel was steaming along to her destination.

Jack handled her with the skill of a veteran pilot, and presently she came to a dead stop, just as her bow grated upon the sandy beach.

Heathcoate smiled approvingly; then singling out Jack, Larry and Captain Jobes, said:

"I want you three to accompany me on a little excursion to Juan Dacresa's village."

"You are the leader of the party, and we will do just as you say," replied Jack, answering for all three, though he did not relish the idea much.

"I am going to burn the entire village to the ground," continued the Englishman, "and completely wind up the job I undertook when I came here to the island."

"Burn the village!" gasped all hands.

"Yes, burn the village. Juan Dacresa has reached the end of his rope, and when he is once dead and his band of freebooters broken up, we will leave for home."

There was no use in endeavoring to swerve the man from his purpose, so picking up their rifles, the three he had chosen proceeded to follow him ashore.

The evening was a warm one, and the stars shone, it seemed, with more than their usual brightness, as the four crossed the strip of sandy beach and entered the forest.

Heathcoate knew the way to the village as well almost as the pirates did themselves, and in a little while they came in sight of it.

"Now," said he, coming to a halt, "are you going to assist me in my work, or must I do it alone?"

"Do you mean for us to set fire to the huts?" asked Jack.

"Yes."

The boy shrugged his shoulders.

"I'd rather not," said he.

Larry and the captain were of the same opinion, though they said nothing.

A moment's silence followed.

Heathcoate lost his temper.

"All right," he responded, hotly, "I'll do the job alone. You can watch and see how well I do it."

In another moment he had left them.

"I don't care whether we have offended him or not," said Jack.

"I could not bring myself to do the act of setting fire to even an enemy's hut. Why, think of it! Women and children are in them, and it is utter folly to make the innocent suffer with the guilty."

"That's my opinion exactly, Jack, old boy!" exclaimed Larry, shaking our hero by the hand.

"And mine, also," put in the captain. "But I shan't interfere, however, though it is awful to think about."

Meanwhile, Heathcoate continued on his way, going cautiously.

He carried the valise he had taken with him on a former occasion, and it was stuffed full of bombs and balls of cotton saturated with oil.

A big bonfire was blazing in front of the pirate king's hut, around which, it seemed, that the entire population of the village had gathered.

A couple of barrels of rum, which had been taken from the captured *Hysperia*, had been tapped, and the Malays were drinking the fiery beverage and making merry over their recent victory, and, as they supposed, the destruction of their enemies in the old cathedral.

Juan Dacresa and Ganzees appeared to be as drunk as lords, and were strolling about through the assemblage arm in arm.

All this Heathcoate took in from a short distance, and a satisfied gleam shone in his eyes.

He drew forth one of the bombs and held it in his hand in a hesitating manner.

But only for a moment, and then the old, vengeful feeling came upon him again.

Lighting the fuse, he hurled the terrible thing into the center of the group of dusky merry-makers.

Boom!

The explosion rang out, carrying death and destruction with it. A scene of the wildest confusion followed.

Heathcoate then began lighting the balls of cotton and throwing them upon the thatched roofs of the huts as he dashed down the single street the village contained.

Before Juan Dacresa and Ganzees could comprehend what had happened, nearly every abode in the village was in a blaze.

Then it seemed as if a perfect pandemonium had broken loose.

The shrieks of women and children rang out above the hoarse cries of the men.

But the Englishman minded it not. He had succeeded in performing his mission, and was making good his escape.

In fifteen minutes from the time he had left Jack and his two companions, he had returned to them.

He did not utter a word, but at once started through the forest toward the beach where the *Avenger* lay.

Casting a last glance at the burning village, our three friends followed.

The explosion of the bomb had not affected Juan Dacresa or Ganzees in any way, save to sober them up, and recovering from his consternation, the latter villain exclaimed:

"Our old enemy has come back from the dead! See! there he goes now, and— By Jove! he is firing the huts!"

He pointed to the form of Robert Heathcoate, which could be plainly seen as he spoke.

"A thousand curses upon his head!" cried the pirate king. "But he shall not escape this time, if I have to pursue him to the very limits of his lair. Come, men!" he shouted, in the Malay tongue, "and follow me! 'Tis death to our enemies or ourselves now!"

Away went the dusky horde of fully two hundred savage men, led by their king and his associate villain, Ganzees, on the track of Robert Heathcoate, leaving the village to the mercy of the flames.

Their venomous instincts were now excited to a boiling pitch, and their one thought was the speedy and complete destruction of the enemy who had committed such terrible havoc in their ranks.

The four fugitives had a good start of their pursuers, however, and they reached the deck of the *Avenger* just as the pirates arrived at the edge of the forest.

The engine was started, and the *Avenger* backed slowly away from the shore.

Heathcoate took the wheel, and steered her straight for the wreck.

The pirates made no attempt to get their proas and follow them, but took their position upon the shore, and prepared to await the coming of the morning.

They were evidently disposed to fight it out, but desired daylight to do the business in.

Arriving at the *Larkspur's* side, the *Avenger* was made fast, and then the Englishman went below to take a few hours' sleep, commissioning Bill Bunt and the engineer to remain on guard upon the *Larkspur's* deck to watch their enemies on the shore.

In vain did Carrie endeavor to persuade her uncle to leave the island and start for home; it was useless. Heathcoate shook his head with a dogged determination.

"I am going to slay Juan Dacresa, and then I will be satisfied," said he.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A DUEL TO THE DEATH!

At last the long night wore away, and the first gray streaks of the coming morning began to show themselves in the east.

The god of day arose like a huge ball of fire, and as his rays began to cast themselves upon the ocean's smooth surface, Heathcoate made his way to the slanting deck of the wreck, and cast his

eyes ashore, to watch his enemies, who were beginning to bestir themselves preparatory to making an attack.

Presently a number of the Malays came around a point of the island, towing with them a number of proas.

In a little while the entire crowd had boarded these, and started for the wreck, with the pirate king and Ganzees at their head.

"We will go to meet them," said Robert Heathcoate, quietly; "and when the fight is over they will not number half as many as they do now!"

The next moment the *Avenger* was slowly steaming toward the shore to meet the approaching horde of pirates.

All hands, save Heathcoate, awaited the result with breathless anxiety.

With his ever-ready bombs at hand, the Englishman awaited patiently.

Nearer approached the Malays, their hoarse, savage cries ringing out on the still, morning air.

When but fifty yards intervened between them and the *Avenger*, Juan Dacresa gave the command to fire.

The next instant a perfect hailstorm of bullets flattened against the iron hull of the boat, doing no damage whatever.

Then, his eyes blazing with fury, Heathcoate ordered the fire to be returned.

Crack! crack! crack!

The protruding muzzles of the Winchester repeaters seemed to belch forth a continuous flame from the loopholes beneath the pilot-house windows.

The shots told, too, with terrible effect, but the pirates were in large numbers, and they came on, not stopping to pick up the wounded who had fallen overboard.

The shooting was kept up from both sides, until finally the *Avenger* was completely surrounded by the fierce Malays.

The Englishman began to get his terrible bombs in readiness.

Just as he was about to throw one of them, there came a sudden volley from the pirates, centered, it seemed, upon one of the heavy plate-glass windows of the pilot house.

The glass was smashed into a thousand pieces and the engineer dropped to the floor—a corpse.

At this there was a loud yell from the attacking party. But it soon turned to dismay, however, for the next instant a bomb struck in the midst of them, exploding and blowing one of the proas into fragments.

But Heathcoate did not stop at this. He began hurling the deadly missiles right and left, all of them doing more or less damage.

Juan Dacresa and Ganzees were as yet unhurt, and seeing that they stood no show whatever against the bombs, they gave the command to return to the shore.

Back for the island went the boatloads of Malays, and when they arrived there a white flag was shown.

"What do they mean now?" asked Heathcoate, savagely.

"They want to parley," said Jack.

"Yes," put in Larry. "See! they are beckoning for you to come nearer to the shore."

"I will hear what they have to say," said the resolute Englishman, as he ran the *Avenger* to within a hundred yards of the shore.

Juan Dacresa walked alone down to the water's edge.

Heathcoate stepped boldly out upon the deck of his craft.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"Are you the leader of the party that has been endeavoring to ruin us of late?" asked the king of the freebooters.

"I am," replied Heathcoate.

"Well, then, I want to ask you if you consider the kind of warfare you are carrying on square?"

"I do; any kind of warfare is square when it tends to rid the world of such cutthroats as you."

"What have you got against me? Have I ever harmed you?"

"Harmed me! If it wasn't for that flag of truce flying yonder I would shoot you through the heart for asking the question."

"State the difficulty, and perhaps we can settle it peacefully."

"It can only be settled in one way," returned Heathcoate, beginning to pace nervously upon the deck of the *Avenger*.

"What way is that?" demanded Dacresa, coolly.

"The whole thing can be settled by your death!"

"Oh! it can, eh? Then why don't you come ashore and kill me?"

"I am coming soon enough. Consider our interview at an end," and the Englishman turned to enter the pilot-house door.

"Hold on!" shouted the pirate king.

Heathcoate stopped.

"What is it?" he demanded.

"Are you willing to meet me on the beach here and fight a duel to the death, with sabers as weapons?"

"I am!" retorted the Englishman, quickly.

"And if you fall, will your party retire from the island and leave us in peace?"

"Yes; I will give you my word that they will."

"Very well, then; move your vessel nearer in shore, so that an equal distance is placed between us from your party and mine. I will give you my word—which has never been broken, by the way—that my followers will not interfere, no matter which of us falls."

Heathcoate waved his hand in token of assent, and going inside at once, ran the vessel ashore at a point further down the beach.

"Don't you think you are a little bit too rash in fighting the pirate in that manner, Mr. Heathcoate?" asked Captain Jobes, in a mild tone.

"I am doing this," was the curt reply.

Seeing that it was useless to say anything, the rest of the party kept their mouths closed.

Selecting a keen-edged saber from his stock of arms, Heathcoate stepped out upon the shore.

Juan Dacresa walked slowly along the water's edge to meet him, coolly puffing away at a cigar.

At length they stood within ten feet of each other.

Both men were entirely devoid of weapons save the sabers, and judging by the looks of them, it promised to be a desperate encounter.

Heathcoate was the first to speak.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"Yes," returned the pirate king, carelessly throwing away the stump of his cigar.

"Then here goes to avenge the death of my murdered brother and his wife!"

He made a savage cut at the pirate as he uttered the words.

Dacresa neatly parried the thrust, and then the two blades began cutting circles of fire in the rays of the morning sun.

The friends of each of the contending parties watched the scene with breathless interest.

Clash! clash! went the steel weapons as they came together, while the eyes of the two men flashed fire.

Suddenly, by a dexterous upper cut, Heathcoate severed Dacresa's left ear clean from his head.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "that's one for me. Your head goes next!"

"Not if I know it!" cried the pirate, making a savage lunge and wounding his opponent in the shoulder.

Heathcoate staggered at this, but quickly recovered in time to parry the next thrust.

Both men now began to proceed more cautiously, and for a time neither gained any particular advantage.

Blood was flowing from both their wounds, but they did not seem to mind this fact, so engrossed were they in the contest.

It was an exciting combat, to say the least, and every brilliant move Juan Dacresa would make was cheered to the echo by the pirates, while Jack and his party could not refrain from doing the same when Heathcoate gained any temporary advantage.

At length there came a time when those gazing upon the scene held their breath and turned their heads for a moment.

Juan Dacresa made a sudden move, as though to sever the Englishman's head from his body, and as he prepared to parry the blow, the pirate changed his move in a twinkling, and drove the blade of his saber clean through the body of his foe.

At the same instant Heathcoate's weapon descended upon Dacresa's head with such force as to completely split his skull in twain.

The pirate king fell to the ground—dead!

Robert Heathcoate staggered blindly about upon the sand for a few seconds, and then recovering himself by a mighty effort for a moment, turned toward those aboard the *Avenger* and faintly shouted the one word:

"Victory!"

The next moment he fell flat upon his face almost at the side of the body of Dacresa.

The brave Englishman's heart had ceased to beat forever.

Truly, it had been a duel to the death.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CONCLUSION.

For a moment no one in either party made a move to go to the spot where the duelists had fallen.

At length Jack stepped outside the pilot house.

"I am going to see if Heathcoate is dead," said he.

In another moment he had sprung upon the sandy beach and was making his way to the spot.

Observing this move, Ganzees also started toward the two men's bodies.

"It's peace yet, is it not?" he asked, eying Jack as he approached.

"Yes," returned our hero. "As soon as we bury Heathcoate, if he is really dead, we are going to leave the island."

"All right. Ah! see—they are both stone dead. By Jove! but that was a desperate duel!"

Jack nodded his head, and then turned his attention to Heathcoate.

A moment's glance sufficed to prove the correctness of Ganzees' assertion.

"He is dead!" he shouted to those on the *Avenger*. "What are you going to do with the body?"

A minute's silence followed, and then Captain Jobes came ashore.

"Miss Heathcoate says to bury him on the island."

"All right," responded our hero. "We will find a suitable spot."

Half a dozen Malays now came to the spot, and picking up Dacresa's body, they started in the direction of the burned village, Ganzees following.

"Good-by!" said he, waving his hand to Jack and the captain; "this is probably the last time that we meet."

Then the entire band of Malays disappeared in the forest.

Jack and Captain Jobs conveyed the remains of Robert Heathcoate to the shade of some trees, and then called to those on board the *Avenger* to come to the spot.

Presently they came, bringing the body of the dead engineer with them.

Frank Hall, though still very weak, accompanied them to witness the burial of the two men.

Carrie Heathcoate's grief at the untimely death of her uncle was intense; and for a time there was hardly a dry eye in the party.

Bill Bunt and Pete, the darkey, soon had a deep grave dug, and after the captain had read the burial service, the bodies were consigned to it and covered up.

At that moment Jack happened to glance in the direction of the *Avenger*.

He gave a violent start.

"Look!" he gasped.

All eyes were instantly turned in the direction.

They beheld Ganzees just in the act of climbing upon the deck of the vessel.

The wily scoundrel could not restrain his deadly hatred to the party, and he had determined to disable the *Avenger* so that she would be utterly useless to them.

While they were busily engaged in burying their dead he had made a detour and reached the craft before he was observed.

He had a heavy ax in his hands, and evidently meant to smash the *Avenger's* delicate machinery.

On seeing that he was observed by Jack's party, he sprang hastily for the door of the pilot house.

But fate had decreed that he was never to accomplish his foul purpose.

At that moment a savage yelp was heard, and Carlo, the bloodhound, sprang from the pilot house and buried his fangs in the villain's throat.

Then ensued a fearful struggle between man and beast, during which both toppled overboard from the deck.

The ax had slipped from Ganzees' hands, and he was at the mercy of the powerful dog.

A brief struggle, and all was over. Ganzees' career of crime was ended.

The party rushed down to the scene, but before they arrived Carlo swam to the shore, and ran to meet them, wagging his tail and shaking the water from his body.

To see him now, one would never think that he had ended the life of a human being a moment before.

"Bravo, Carlo!" said Jack, patting the animal's head; "you have saved the *Avenger* for us."

Just as the sun was setting, the *Avenger* was pushed off the beach, and bidding farewell to the island on which they had passed through so many perils and strange adventures, the party turned their faces homeward.

Proceeding due north, they at length arrived at Achoen, on the northwestern part of Sumatra.

Here Carrie was offered a good price for the *Avenger*, and knowing that the strange-looking vessel would attract more or less attention on their voyage home, she concluded to dispose of it.

They remained here for a day or so, and then took passage on a ship to Calcutta, and from thence to Liverpool.

The treasure Jack had found in the old cathedral vault made the entire party more than millionaires.

Telegraph dispatches had been sent from Calcutta to the relatives of each of the boys to let them know that they were safe and sound, and when they arrived at Liverpool Frank Hall's father was there to meet them.

Carrie Heathcoate bid a tearful farewell to her friends and set out for London, to the residence of a distant relative, who had been apprised of her coming.

Jack was the last to part with her, and as he held her hand in his the tears started unbidden to his eyes, and he said, in a husky voice:

"Miss Carrie, if I write to you when I return home, will you answer my letter?"

"Why, certainly I will, Jack—see, I call you Jack—don't call me Miss Carrie; I don't like it from you. Call me plain Carrie."

"All right," responded our hero, squeezing her hand; "don't forget."

"I won't, never fear," and the next moment the girl had entered the railroad coach and was on her way to London.

In due time the steamer that Jack and his party embarked on arrived at New York, and our hero at once repaired to the home of his widowed mother on Staten Island.

It would be useless for us to describe the meeting between the two. The same thing has been gone over repeatedly; but we just ask any of our boy readers to imagine himself in the place of Jack Darling, and he can better judge what the meeting really was.

Three months after the time of their safe arrival home, Jack Darling, Larry O'Dowd and Frank Hall were at college together, studying to gain an education, which is so essential to any boy.

And right here, boys, let me say: "Don't neglect your studies; read all the stories of adventure that you have a mind to, but don't let them interfere with you in your struggle for a knowledge of the world, and what it contains."

Captain Jobs soon got command of another ship, fully as good as the *Larkspur* had been, and Bill Bunt and Pete, the darkey, again shipped under him.

Jack finally graduated at college, and at the age of twenty-one set sail for Europe.

Can the reader imagine what errand he was upon?

No doubt you can.

He was going to attend a wedding, and that wedding was his own, for he was to be married to Carrie Heathcoate on his arrival in London.

After his marriage, he and his wife made a long tour of the Continent, and at length returned to New York, where they intended to make their home.

They were living there yet at last accounts, and we must not forget that Carlo, the noble dog, who had been such a help to them in many trying times, is with them still.

Though a little older and more grizzled, perhaps, he is still the same old Carlo.

And now, dear reader, we shall have to write

THE END.

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